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A handbook for the building and managing of the office worker: gender, genre, and textual surveillance in 1930s office communication

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A handbook for the building and managing
of the office worker: gender, genre, and textual surveillance
in 1930s office communication

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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2007

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Peggy, who is the smartest, strongest, funniest, most dynamic woman I know. She taught me how to be irreverent and tough, and it has served me well. I always want to do well so she will be proud of me. Thank you for everything, Mom. I truly could not have done this without you. I love you with all my heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
ABSTRACT		v
CHAPTER ONE.	Overview of Project: Genre Analysis of Emerging Corporate Culture	1
CHAPTER TWO.	Theoretical background: Genre, Gender, and 1930s Office Communication	21
CHAPTER THREE.	Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis	44
CHAPTER FOUR.	Analysis: Constructing Gender Narratives Through Etiquette	67
CHAPTER FIVE.	Analysis: Textual Surveillance, Scientific Management, and the NRA Personnel Records	121
CONCLUSION	Findings, Implications, and Directions for Future Research	213
WORKS CITED		226

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ABSTRACT

Women were part of the office workplace as early as the late 1800s, but by the 1930s they were there to stay, and the secretarial profession had become their domain. This demographic shift in the office was a momentous one; it challenged the culture and values of the traditional office place environment, and it contributed to the gendering of new office technology. To complicate matters, because the nation had fallen into the Great Depression, the work space was contested more than ever as debates raged on about whether women deserved to have jobs at all when many men did not.

This dissertation explores this transformation via the historical intersection between gender and office communications in the 1930s. To do so, the dissertation conducts an analysis of two sites: professional etiquette handbooks and New Deal-era National Recovery Act personnel records. By applying genre theory to these office communications, the dissertation explains how office communications served as vehicles of “textual surveillance,” creating a specific type of office worker amenable to contemporaneous trends in scientific office management practices most clearly embodied in the work of Frederick Taylor.

The genre analysis also reveals how these office communications created specific narratives concerning gender for men and women during a time in office history when the female office worker was initially established as part of the business landscape, particularly in the secretarial profession. These narratives serve as what Latour would call “immutable mobiles.” These immutable mobiles lend themselves to office-place manipulation for the good of workplace efficiency because they do not include non-standard details that could slow down managerial efficiency. The immutable mobiles, in other words, make otherwise irreducibly different human beings into more or less fungible commodities to be manipulated as deemed necessary by office management. The study concludes that the function of office communications is not only determined by internal office place dynamics, but by external issues such as gender as well.

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT: GENRE ANALYSIS OF AN EMERGING CORPORATE CULTURE

What follows is a study of 1930s office communications artifacts and the way those communications circulated within the discourse of a burgeoning “corporate culture” during that tumultuous decade.¹ Several historical events collided in the 1930s: Roosevelt’s National Recovery Act, the adaptation to and “re-gendering” of new office technologies, the roots of the contemporary corporate hierarchy, the influence of Taylor’s Scientific Management Theories, and the acceptance of women working in the business office. Also during the 1930s, the paradigms of record-keeping were forming, as was the shape of the modern day office. The shape of the modern day office was particularly affected by the newly emerging presence of women in the office as full participants. Office workers during the 1930s had to contend with the Great Depression; it changed the way they looked at their jobs and made them more aware of their job performance in an attempt to keep those jobs. These issues provide a vibrant lens through which to examine the way genres are constructed as professional communications.

Like history, corporate culture is neither monolithic nor stable; it consistently undergoes shifts in trends and values. In the middle of the 1930s, in fact, the culture of corporations—the culture of business as a whole—was attempting to stabilize after nearly sixty years of

¹ The term “corporate culture” was coined in the 1982 book *Corporate Cultures* by Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy; the authors are given credit for being the first to claim that organizations had cultures, “a cohesion of values, myths, heroes, and symbols that come to mean a great deal to the people who work there” (4).

rapid growth and development. As observed by Kwolek-Folland, this rapid growth and development involved multiple factors:

Beginning with the introduction, around 1870, of office machines (such as the typewriter), new office buildings (such as the skyscraper), new forms of internal communication (such as the circular memo) and new kinds of office workers (such as typists and stenographers), financial industries instituted an array of changes in office work and business organization.

(3)

Stabilizing office culture meant developing ways to understand, account for, and control the work force. As businesses grew in size, their ability to handle their employees even on a simple day-to-day basis became a central issue. One can imagine a manager asking a flurry of questions: Where do we put all these new workers? How do we hire the best workers for our office? Should spatial office divisions be based on individual tasks, gender, or something else entirely? To what extent do we differentiate between particular jobs? How would this classification work? How will we keep track of all this information?

Complicating this process, as noted above, was the fact that one of the new kinds of office workers Kwolek-Folland refers to above was the female kind. In fact, many other office changes of that era can be traced to the influx of women into the office in large numbers starting after WWI.² Kwolek-Folland notes that “In 1870, women comprised only 2.5% of

² See, among others, Margery Davis’ *Woman’s Place Is at The Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers 1870-1930*. Lisa Fine’s, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930*. Rotella, Elyce J. *From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870-1930*.

the clerical labor force; by 1930, 52.5% of all clerical workers were female” (4). This unprecedented shift in workplace population not only meant shifts in how companies dealt with workers, but shifts in how workers entered this population, and how they interacted with one another once they got there. Multiple questions presented themselves to an employee: What do I need to do to get one of these jobs? What do they want in an employee? How do I become the best employee I can? What is the best way to act around the co-workers I see each and every day?

The answers to these kinds of questions provided by the office communication genres³ of the 1930s constitute the site of investigation for this study. The examined genres include, in Chapter Four, communications external to the office such as office etiquette books, and, in Chapter Five, internal office communications such as application materials and Job Description Questionnaires. Through “textual surveillance” performed by these genres, professional communications played a part in the formulation of a cohesive corporate culture in the 1930s.

By investigating a sampling of these 1930s office communication genres, this study responds to the need indicated by Charles Bazerman for more studies of history in professional communication. Such a study will provide one more piece to the ongoing project of professional communications: to create a database of specific historical accounts of

³ Chapter Two is a lengthy explanation of genre and the theories of genre I am using. The use of this term in the introduction is a reference to genre based on form, or categories of office documents based on like formatting—the format of memos vs. application letters vs. application forms, etc.

professional communication, a database from which larger claims about the nature of professional communication can be made.

Chapter Two sets out the groundwork for the feminist-informed methodology that guides the analysis contained in Chapters Three and Four. As discussed fully in Chapter Two, a genre methodology informed by feminism allows for an analysis of one of the most important components of that 1930s office culture: the construction of gendered identities for men and women. Where there is culture, office or otherwise, there is enculturation. A feminist-informed methodology allows the study to examine how both workers and management participate in the creation of this enculturation, whether this enculturation occurs through communications inside or outside of the office place.

In the context of a developing corporate culture in the 1930s, enculturation includes the formulation of gender roles in a work setting. Prior to the time that women were sitting at office desks, men had only other men with whom to negotiate their gender role in the office. The 1930s office, however, where men and women worked together, was a different animal altogether. Not only did men have to revise their gendered selves in this context, but women struggled to grasp their still-developing office identity. This study will demonstrate that textual genres were one means by which those gendered identities were established. Through both form and action,⁴ the etiquette books and the office records worked as methods of textual surveillance.

⁴ See Carolyn Miller. "Genre as social action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70 (1984): 151-167.

Therefore, cultural context is critical to this study. To provide this cultural focus, this introduction provides a short historical introduction to the era of these communications.

- **Part I** of this introduction provides a general overview of the Great Depression.
- **Part II** discusses the place of women in the Great Depression-era office place.
- **Part III** concludes with a brief preview of the remainder of the study: its site of investigation, its research questions, and its chapters' topics.

PART I: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION THE GREAT DEPRESSION⁵

The rhetorical artifacts considered in this study find their origin in the unique period of American history known as the Great Depression. Certainly, the United States had experienced previous economic depressions, such as the Panic of 1893 (McElvaine 6). Business and the economy in general have the tendency to fluctuate between success and failure. Each of these cycles produces some kind of economic downturn, if only for a year or two. The Great Depression was different, though. It proved to be “much deeper, wider and longer” than these previous downturns (McElvaine 7). Although the Great Depression hit countries all over the world hard, particularly large industrial cities such as London and Berlin, this summary focuses almost exclusively on its effects in the United States.

As is well known, the Great Depression brought a disastrous end to the phenomenal economic boom of the 1920s. During this economic boom,

⁵ For more thorough histories of the 1930s read Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Coming of the New Deal. The Age of Roosevelt*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958; Robert McElvaine. *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1993 or David E. Kyvig. *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived During the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Press, 2004.

[p]roductivity increased astronomically. Between 1920 and 1929 output per person-hour soared upward by 63 percent [...] Starting from a tiny base in 1922, sales of radios had increased by 1400 percent by 1929. There was similar, if not quite so spectacular, explosion in sales of such household appliances as vacuum cleaners, electric irons, refrigerators, and washing machines. (McElvaine 17)

And then, of course, there was the automobile (McElvaine 18). During the 1920s, “The economic growth [. . .] [was] so phenomenal that some had come to believe that these profitable conditions had become permanent” (Kyvig 210).

These profitable conditions involved the acceleration of mass consumerism to unprecedented levels (Kyvig 212). In fact, according to one commentator, “The key to the economy was now consumption” (McElvaine 17). Mass consumerism, moreover, expanded beyond household products and embraced even more ephemeral products based in entertainment such as mass sporting events held in stadiums for boxing and baseball, in particular (Kyvig 158).

All of this consumerism created some new social opportunities, one of which involved the blurring of class distinctions. According to Strom, “The new mass culture of dance halls, movies, amusement parks and ready-made clothing stores offered an urban milieu in which it was no longer unrespectable for middle-class women to mingle with English-speaking working-class women in their leisure time” (Strom 316).

In addition to some class elasticity, taking on new meanings during this period was the concept of what role a woman generally played in the world. McElvaine associates this role that of the New Woman (McElvaine 19). The most famous cultural icon for this new role is the Flapper. Whereas, in 1920, *The Atlantic* stated that women bore “the entire responsibility of the human race;” the advent of the Flapper, according to historian Paula Fass, caused the moral traditionalist to see “the end of American civilization as he knew it” (McElvaine 19). One of the more alarming characteristics of the Flapper was her tendency to intermingle unsupervised with males: “[Y]oung ladies—if that was the appropriate word—were beginning to . . . ride in automobiles with men . . . and engage—with men to whom they were not even engaged—in such unspeakable practices as kissing and . . . who could be sure what else?” (McElvaine 19) Early on in the decade, the Flapper was apparently already an issue of controversy as Ohio attempted to “prohibit the sale of any ‘garment which unduly displays or accentuates the lines of the female figure’” (McElvaine 20).

This new role extends past the Flapper, though. Another manifestation of what McElvaine calls the New Woman is one of the players in this study: the woman office worker. As Strom articulates state affairs regarding women’s professional prospects during the 1920s generally, “[U]rbanization and industrialization continued to undermine the economic position of families in rural communities and small towns, [as] native-born daughters with middle-class identities and very slim pocketbooks poured into the cities to seek respectable work.” (Strom 316). Such respectable work had become expected as a means of maintaining a new middle-class way of life. By way of maintaining these developments, the government created a life-support system called the National Recovery Administration which not only

expanded the role of the office in record-keeping and cataloguing, but also the role of those people who would be responsible for that record-keeping: women.

As the 1930s approached, several historical shifts came together to create a chaos where dividing lines were suddenly not as clear as they were before. It was not just the poor who were jobless, and the wealthy class was not the only audience for consumerism. Just as mass culture blurred class lines, so did the image of the ‘woman worker’ blur class lines. Strom’s discussion of this matter indicates that to occupy the middle-class status of woman office worker, a woman had to categorically eschew former class distinctions.

The new office, while hardly eradicating class differences, did create a new social environment in which middle- and working-class women worked alongside each other and even intermingled socially. The dramatic slowing of immigration after World War I, the rising number of native-born daughters, and the growing numbers of teenaged children attending high school contributed to this mingling and further blurring of class lines. A social movement of such enormous proportions quite naturally produced public discourse aimed at processing the new phenomenon. (Strom 316-317)

Strom points out that not only were an unprecedented number of women in the office, payrolls were filled out by women normally seen on factory lines. Understandably, people began to talk—from street-level chatter to newspaper editorials. Public discourse processing a new phenomenon plays heavily in the idea of professional communication genres functioning as a type of discourse that processed the new phenomenon of the woman worker.

The consumerist 1920s within which these women achieved new social standing ended with the stock market crash of October 1929. The crash, however, did more than just end an economic spending spree. Whereas the stock market had served a celebration of a never-ending growth of wealth, the crash ushered in a new era of chaos and uncertainty (Kyvig 210, McElvaine 11). Chaos reigned supreme in employment, in industry, and in agriculture—and not just for economic reasons. The Oklahoma dust bowl, for instance, enveloped farmers in suffocating clouds of dirt. As if symbolizing the state of the nation, the dust from those clouds of dirt would eventually settle over the entire East Coast (Kyvig 184-85).

Under President Hoover, the initial response of the federal government to this economic catastrophe was a hands-off approach. According to Hoover, no financial aid would be forthcoming to individual unemployed people because it would constitute “[...] an unexampled raid on the public treasury. . . . We cannot thus squander ourselves into prosperity” (McElvaine 67). Hoover followed through on this position by instituting a number of well-meaning but ultimately ineffectual economic-recovery boards such as the National Credit Corporation.

Hoover’s Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, took an even more strident approach, claiming that the Depression may even constitute a “beneficial readjustment” (McElvaine 30). Mellon suggested to President Hoover that “[...] a panic was not altogether a bad thing. . . . It will purge the rottenness out of the system. . . . People will work harder, live a more moral life. Values will be adjusted, and enterprising people will pick up the wrecks from less competent people” (McElvaine 30). Mellon went so far as to engage in a plot to gain control

of the Democratic Party, repeal Prohibition, and then heavily tax the working-man's drink of choice: beer. In addition, Mellon also intended to shift the tax burden from the rich to the middle-class through the institution of a sales tax.

Finally, Hoover succumbed to the federal aid temptation (McElvaine 69-70). Nevertheless, this approach, too, was the proverbial too little and too late to save Hoover. By this point, enough people considered the Great Depression to have been personally perpetrated and perpetuated by Hoover (McElvaine 52). Unfortunately for Hoover and his Republican allies, the voters took their frustration out on Hoover and voted in the Democrats across the board in the 1932 election.

The captain of the Democratic team, and the newly elected President, was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In contrast to Hoover, Roosevelt adopted a heavily federalist-based approach. This approach, generally referred to historically as the New Deal, took the shape of several federal government initiatives over the course of the 1930s.

The initial phase of Roosevelt's New Deal is sometimes referred to as the first New Deal, which is regarded as stretching from 1932 to 1935. This period saw the beginning of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act (EFMA). It is during the period of this first New Deal that Congress authorized the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) (McElvaine 158), some personnel records of which are dealt with in detail in Chapter Five of

this study. This first New Deal is generally considered to have ended with when the Supreme Court unanimously found the NRA to be “an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power” (McElvaine 162).

Though Roosevelt had already decided to shift gears for the second New Deal, the Supreme Court’s declaration provided a convenient excuse for him to do it publicly (McElvaine 259). By 1935, the New Deal already had lost its steam and national grumbling had picked up again, this time against Roosevelt (McElvaine 253). Whereas Roosevelt’s first New Deal could be characterized as primarily benefiting banking and private enterprise, according to McElvaine, Roosevelt’s second New Deal would be characterized by a sharper turn to the left in an effort to regain the support of workers (258-259). The second New Deal saw the birth of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Roosevelt’s effort to avoid an outright dole by connecting relief funds to the accomplishment of specified public works projects (McElvaine 254-255). The Social Security Act was also passed during this time.

The New Deal, however, did not end the Great Depression. “In 1939,” says McElvaine, “a full decade after the crash, 9.4 million Americans remained unemployed” (McElvaine 306). During the final parts of the 1930s, 775,000 people were slashed from the WPA workforce; only 100,000 of those found private employment (McElvaine 308). Finally, the Great Depression began to lift during 1939 as a result of military spending (McElvaine 307). In McElvaine’s view, the New Deal did not end as much as “it simply faded away” (McElvaine 309).

PART II. THE EMERGING IDENTITY OF THE WOMAN WORKER IN THE 1930s

Here then, was the situation in which office workers of the Great Depression found themselves: an entire demographic had developed a taste for a middle-class life that had now been snatched away by the dehumanizing conditions of grave unemployment. The Roaring Twenties had even provided women with access to educational opportunities expressly designed to prepare them for the public work place. Sharon Hartman Strom contends that “High school education and business college training gave women from different classes, ethnic groups, and parts of the country a common set of experiences and expectations before they entered offices” (Strom 316). But with no jobs available, these educational opportunities could not bear fruit for women.

Though women worked in business offices as early as the 1880s, by the 1930s they were there to stay. Although office culture was still in the adaptation phase in response to the demographic shift, the shape of the modern office was solidifying; this is why I am focusing on this particular decade. As critical as the first appearance of women in the office is, I am more interested in the interplay between adaptation and stabilization characteristic of the 1930s office—on the one hand, the consistent appearance of women on company payrolls, and on the other hand the enculturation women were undergoing on their way to constructing a distinct workplace identity. The 1930s is rife with evidence of women establishing themselves in the office environment. The initial shock had faded by the middle of the 1930s, and business developed applications, job descriptions, and evaluative terminology in an attempt to adapt to the presence of women in the business world. This was done, however, at the same time the culture of the times was not thoroughly comfortable seeing women as

part of the business world. These women, and the men who worked alongside them, attempted to create successful office personas in the 1930s; these specific personas helped the office hierarchy become more distinct. The development of these personas is the focus of this study.

Women in business as objects of academic inquiry is not new. Several studies of women in business, including Lisa Fine's *The Souls of the Skyscraper Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930*; Sharon Hartman Strom's *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930*, and *Incorporating Women. A History of Women and Business in the United States and Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930*, both by Angel Kwolek-Folland, have illustrated the complexity of women's presence in business. But even a brief look at the titles reveals a clear historical line between the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. By the end of the 1920s women had transitioned into the workplace and attempted to define and solidify the role of their gendered selves in the office. In a broad sense, the 1930s marked the beginning of the rest of the 20th century.

A Singular Moment in Business History

As set out by researching historians such as Davies, there were several historical reasons for the influx of women into the office place. First, the all-encompassing job of being a mother was reduced somewhat: "Many tasks of social motherhood were taken over by schools, peers, and the media" (Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating* 134). Activities such as after-school clubs, scouting, organized sports, and Bible school expanded many children's access to

community interaction. Plus, following WWI, companies needed to keep better and more extensive records; suddenly a large number of workers were needed to maintain these records. The basic requirement for secretarial work was “literacy,” and “[...] in addition to shrinking domestic responsibilities, some women had better access to higher education and better training” (Kwolek-Folland, Incorporating 134).

According to Margery Davies’ account, as more women entered office positions as clerks, typists, and stenographers, men advanced to management positions, which allowed a clearer hierarchy to form. Some of these promotions to management were in name only, given to men so they could save face; it was considered demeaning for a man to have the same job as a woman (56). Women came cheaper than men did, too, and they seemed a perfect fit in these “smaller” roles. Since office managers were creating the roles of the new office as they went, the newer, lower-paid positions were not yet gendered. This meant women did not have to be perceived as “taking over men’s work,” a view that would have created great tension in societal discourse.

These decades also witnessed the introduction of office machinery: the dictaphone, the Teletype, the tabulator, computing devices, and the typewriter. Of these machines, the typewriter was arguably the most significant technological advance. Davies contends the typewriter helped ease women into the office because the machine had not yet been “sex-typed” and therefore was not considered definitively masculine.

Although women's new place in the office was controversial, it was also a success. Rotella attributes the overall increase in clerical employment to substantial changes in the economy as a whole. She explains that both the supply and demand sides of the business market contributed to the dramatic increase in the amount of clerical work by women (169). This kind of economic theorizing is common to histories of the office place, but it does not give us a full picture; namely, these economic explanations do not account for how men and women were socialized to see and enact these new positions and technologies. Such socialization entails an involvement in a rhetorical community. This rhetorical community leaves footprints—rhetorical artifacts that the scholar can examine. As explained next, these traces constitute the investigation sites for this study.

PART III. RESEARCH SITES FOR ANALYSIS: ETIQUETTE BOOKS AND PERSONNEL DOCUMENTS

Rhetorical artifacts examined in this study include business etiquette books specifically geared towards the office worker, and personnel records. Examining these handbooks and personnel documents will provide a fuller understanding of this period in the history of professional communications because, while historians have shown us that these historical trends existed, they have not shown us how these trends operated rhetorically. Thus, a rhetorical understanding of historical trends echoes Kenneth Burke's admonishment: "We cannot look to reality to know what a word means. We must look at language to see what reality means" (253).

Countless etiquette books were published from 1900-1960. They covered everything from housekeeping and dinner party etiquette for women, to general societal protocol for both men and women. One set of these books covered office etiquette for secretaries, and those books are my focus here. There were at least 40 to 50 of these secretarial handbooks published between 1900 and 1960, but my analysis is narrowed to a sample of five of them published in the 1930s. Focusing only on the handbooks published in the 1930s, I can zero in on a very distinct moment in office history. Although my larger argument about the etiquette books does not hinge on an argument about their actual readership, it is important to see that various iterations of these books continued to be published, as well as be preserved on library shelves. These texts represent one part of the cultural production of the “working woman,” a production that worked in tandem with the “working man.”

The other texts for my analysis are personnel records currently housed by the National Archives and Records Administration in Record Group 9. These records, a collection of over 300 documents, are from the National Recovery Administration (NRA), an FDR New Deal program designed to promote employment opportunities during the Depression Era. The documents in Record 9 include women’s application materials, job descriptions, payroll lists, personal letters, and correspondence between different levels in the government hierarchy. These records offer particularly valuable data for my study because they allow me to investigate how internal textual practices worked with the general advice in the etiquette handbooks to engineer a meaningful corporate culture.

I settled on these records after an extensive search through various personnel archive collections. These National Recovery Act records seemed particularly generative for three reasons. One, they fell within the time frame on which I am concentrating; all of these materials are dated between 1930 and 1939. In addition, the multiple professional communication genres allow me to get a fuller sense of the interplay between the etiquette books and the other texts. Finally, these records simply contain very interesting and nuanced information. Many of the application materials contain handwritten notes and comments. Several of the application letters are written on personal stationery and include personal details from women's lives in the 1930s. These documents are rich with detail vital for the kind of analysis I am conducting.

Research Questions

Five fundamental research questions guided this study:

- How does evaluating office communication in terms of genre enrich the study of organizational history?
- What roles do genres play in stabilizing an office place after vast change?
- How does a consideration of gender enrich historical genre study?
- What roles do genres play in the construction of a coherent corporate culture?
- What role does gender play in office enculturation?

Organization of Study

This study seeks to answer these questions over the course of the next five chapters:

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background: Genre, Gender, and 1930s Office Communication

Chapter Two is a literature review of theoretical background for this study's methodology.

As explained in Chapter Two, this methodology encourages the scholar to examine the social situation that informs and is informed by a genre. This social situation includes the actions of those who read and write a genre, actions which, according to feminist theory, can be understood better by considering the gender of the participant.

Chapter Three

Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

Chapter Three describes how the secretarial etiquette books were chosen, and how the National Recovery Act personnel records were sorted and considered. This chapter first explains why I chose these two sources of data, detail the selection methods I used for choosing the etiquette books I analyzed, and then explain my analysis methods step-by-step. Following that I will give context to the personnel records, detail the ones I analyzed, and again explain the data analysis process.

Chapter Four

Analysis: Constructing Gender Narratives Through Etiquette

Chapter Four analyzes the secretarial handbooks as a coherent genre and aims to understand the rhetorical work this genre does. Analyzing etiquette books as a genre also contributes one small database to the collection from which professional communications will draw its generalizations as to the nature of professional communication. The chapter discusses the general content of the handbooks as they shape the role of women's and men's gendered roles in the office place. It considers the differences in approach between the handbooks intended for a primarily female audience and those intended for a primarily male audience. In doing so, Chapter Four will set out the professional communication mechanisms by which the secretarial handbooks of the 1930s contribute to the construction of an organized corporate value system by prescribing strict narratives of gender. Furthermore, this chapter will propose ways these strict gender narratives effectuated efficiency within the office.

Chapter Five

Analysis: Textual Surveillance, Scientific Management and the National Recovery Act Personnel Records

Chapter Five provides a more familiar database for consideration: personnel records, in this case, National Recovery Act personnel records from the 1930s. These records provide further insight into how the 1930s office sought stability through the development of discernible genres that enabled what I am calling textual surveillance. In doing so, Chapter Five demonstrates what work the NRA personnel records do.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Findings, Implications, and Directions for Future Research

The conclusion articulates the findings of this genre analysis by answering the research questions posed in this chapter; the chapter will also discuss how this study relates to current scholarship, and it will suggest direction for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: GENRE, GENDER, AND 1930s OFFICE COMMUNICATION

*We need more studies of actual business communication practices
within specific businesses and organizations.*
Kitty Locker⁶

*Office stories still have much to teach us about
gender in the workplace. We need to listen.*
Jeanne Weiland Herrick⁷

Using a feminist-informed generic methodology, my study examines secretarial etiquette handbooks published in the 1930s (Chapter Four) and a set of National Recovery Administration personnel records from that same time period (Chapter Five) to examine genre's role in organizational stability and employee enculturation. Here in Chapter Two I will provide theoretical background for this analysis, citing relevant scholarship to trace its roots. My methodology borrows not only from genre theory and feminism, but also from organizational history and rhetorical theory. Each of these disciplines contributes to my methodology in order to get at the importance of what I believe to be a singular moment in office history where several cultural shifts crossed paths in the localized setting of the office. The particulars of this historical juncture were detailed in Chapter One, but its relevance to this chapter is that the interdisciplinary nature of my methodology is directly connected to the complex nature of the 1930s office. Conducting an analysis of my artifacts without all three

⁶ Locker, Kitty O., Scott L. Miller, Malcolm Richardson, Elizabeth Tableaux, and JoAnne Yates. "Studying Business Communication." *Business Communication Quarterly* 59 (1996): 109-127.

⁷ Herrick Weiland, Jeanne. "'And Then She Said': Office Stories and What They Tell Us about Gender in the Workplace." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 13 (1999): 274-296.

disciplinary influences would result not just in a less thorough study, but a study lacking in coherence as a whole.

In the next pages I will provide a map of the disciplinary influences on my study in two major parts:

- **Part I** reviews foundational work by genre theorists in professional communication, and an update on current trends in genre study.
- **Part II** begins with a discussion of the use of gender in Professional Communication studies. It is followed by a definition of the term feminism as it used in this analysis, and a discussion of what including gender offers my analysis of the 1930s communication artifacts.

Understanding Genre Study

To offer theoretical background for my study (detailed in the Chapter Three) I am using Karen Foss' terminology.⁸ Genre⁹ study allows me to investigate the rhetorical forms that constitute genre, which, “[...] not only structure the meanings of a particular social reality, but [they] also reflect beliefs, attitudes, and values and thus arise out of that reality” (Foss 11). In studying the rhetorical forms and genres surrounding the 1930s office, my goal is to construct a value system manifested by both the office etiquette books and the National Recovery Administration personnel records, a value system that created the everyday culture of these workers. This culture includes narratives about the good employee, the good male

⁸ Foss, Sonja K. *Rhetorical Criticism. Exploration and Practice*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1989.

⁹ Foss actually uses the term ‘generic study’ rather than ‘genre study’ but I have opted to use ‘genre study’ because it is more inline with usage in the Professional Communication field.

worker, and the good female worker, all of which contribute to a master narrative of what a successful office looks like and how it operates.

One way to construct this value system is to investigate “how rhetorical forms have developed, changed, and degenerated” (Foss 113). The artifacts—the rhetorical forms—I have studied cannot offer a complete picture of the 1930s office, of course, but they are fragmented snapshots of the role genre plays in the construction of a corporate culture. The small collection of NRA records and the office etiquette handbooks analyzed offer a “[...] fuller picture of the evolution of rhetoric in a culture and of the threads that unite the rhetoric of culture” (Foss 113).

The etiquette books contain specialized direction on becoming the best representation of your gender you can be. Women and men who want to be successful parts of the office system need to fit in the office machine. No part of them should stick out enough that the machine becomes clogged or forced to stop altogether. This phenomenon is discussed at length in the more complex analysis of office etiquette books in Chapter Five. Carolyn Miller says a genre “[...] is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with recurrent” (Genre 163). The etiquette books connected employees’ “private” or internalized motivations with the presentation of their public selves as office workers. From the NRA records, the Job Description Questionnaires turn mundane, daily tasks into a “public” organizational or official job description. These transformations, just two examples of rhetorical shifts

facilitated by business world genres, contributed to the construction of a corporate culture, a culture that served as one factor in stabilizing the 1930s office.

Stability is also achieved by creating ideal job candidates with the lines and spaces that make up an application form. In her 1990 article “Genre and Activity Systems” Dorothy Winsor contends, “Such categories exert influence through standard headings, for instance, or, more subtly, through commonly held expectations about what is appropriate to include” (203).

Although Winsor is referring to generic reports in her analysis of engineering activity systems, I believe the same principle applies to the NRA generic application forms, which just like generic reports “[...] generate content-and meaning-determining categories” (203).

The right kind of candidate can offer his or her potential employer not just basic contact information, but enough previous job history and relevant experience to fill 8-10 lines of white space, as well as not one, not two, but three helpful references. In this instance, “The combination of form and substance at one level becomes an action (has meaning) at a higher level when that combination itself acquires form” (Miller 160).

All of this information contributes to a coherent workplace culture where employees know their job and their general place in the hierarchy. Resistance to and participation in this meaning-making process will be discussed in Chapter Five. Just like the etiquette books, the application materials are key to shaping the corporate culture of the 1930s. The culture of the 1930s office is constructed, in part, by the artifacts I am studying, and by identifying them and studying them as genres I hope to give them significance to the history of professional communication. This goal is accomplished using a feminist-informed generic methodology.

PART I. EVOLVING NOTIONS OF GENRE

Genres have traditionally been understood as categories of texts that share certain formal properties. Traditional literary genres such as novels and poems were bound together by their formal features. This was also the case in the field of rhetoric, where categories were articulated based primarily on formal properties. Robert Connors, in his historical study of the “modes” approach to composition, argues that 19th century composition textbooks such as Alexander Bain’s *English Composition in Rhetoric* popularized the idea that writing is best understood as a system of categories—more concretely, the four categories or “modes” known as exposition, narration, description, and argumentation. While each of these modes could be understood in terms of rhetorical purpose, composition theorists preferred to understand them formalistically. Connors contends that until the resurgence of rhetoric studies in the mid-twentieth century, people who studied composition were more concerned with the “what” of categories of texts than the “why.”

Lloyd Bitzer is considered to be among the first to contribute to a rhetorical understanding of genres that stressed the actual purpose and use of texts instead of their formal properties. Bitzer argues that rhetorical responses require a need or problem (an “exigence”) that can be addressed through discourse. This exigence is the catalyst to a “fitting” response that is invited by the situation itself.

Carolyn Miller critiques Bitzer’s notion of recurring rhetorical situations in her landmark essay “Genre as Social Action,” arguing that the problem with Bitzer’s understanding of situations is that it defines them as sets of material conditions. Any understanding of

recurring situations based on material conditions, however, is flawed because the exact material conditions that constitute one situation can never be repeated in another. Instead, Miller would have us understand situations as social constructs—we interpret the material conditions of situations we are confronted with through our ever growing and changing stock of interpretive “types.” Once we interpret the material conditions of a situation as closely matching previous, similar situations, we classify it as one of a type. That we classify situations in the act of interpreting them highlights the fundamental role of classification in human activity, which, in turn, highlights the key role genres, which are also founded in classification, play in explaining communication.

Miller contends that rhetorical situations recur, and that such recurrences are accompanied by similar rhetorical responses. This process produces genres that gain strength and become more recognizable (yet at the same more invisible as active forces in the office) over time:

From day to day, year to year, comparable situations occur, prompting comparable responses. [...] The situation recurs and, because we experience situations and the rhetorical responses to them, a form of discourse is not only established but comes to have a power of its own—the tradition itself tends to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form. (Genre 13)

For example, the lines of an application form dictate the nature and amount of information an applicant can offer his or her potential employer. The longer an application form stays in use as a primary information-obtaining device, the more the details it elicits are understood as the “best” details for assessment of worker credentials. The more familiar and part of the system it becomes, the less and less it is seen. Thus it becomes “a constraint upon any new

response.” To new participants in this culture, though (e.g. thousands of women in the 1930s), the constraints are very visible, and some participants will test ways to subvert the boundaries of the genre. This boundary resistance comes from all directions, though, as both management and workers find ways to test the limitations of the genres.

Applying Genre Theory to the 1930s Office

It is through the study of seemingly mundane documents such as office communications that scholars have learned the most intricate workings of rhetoric in the production of human knowledge. In *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication*, Berkenkotter and Huckin state, “Knowledge production is carried out and codified largely through generic forms of writing: lab reports, working papers, reviews, grant proposals, technical reports, conference papers, journal articles, monographs, and so on” (1). To Berkenkotter and Huckin’s list of documents, I would add secretarial handbooks and NRA personnel records as subjects for rhetorical investigation.

This rhetorical investigation, however, does not take place in a formalist vacuum. The professional communication field has always valued a historical approach to this study of rhetoric. Rhetoric and professional communication scholars such as Charles Bazerman and JoAnne Yates have traced the history of various communication artifacts in the formulation of the office we know today—what role communication played, how its genres have evolved, how “good” writing developed, and how various technologies, including writing, changed the shape of the office. According to Yates, who studied professional communication development from 1850-1920 in her book *Control Through Communication: The Rise of*

System in American Management, “Far more than any previous bureaucracies within business, the military, government, and religion, [offices] required communication on an unprecedented scale at unparalleled speeds” (xi). To manage this unparalleled need, “[...] a rising tide of technical and organizational innovations appeared, all designed to improve communication and control in complex organization” (xi). Yates’ examination of business culture allows her “[...] to understand the human and organizational contexts in which change came to the modern economy” (xi). By simultaneously analyzing the coming of the new office technologies and the rise of systematic management, she is able to place her case studies in the larger setting of the business system as a whole.

The historical approach to rhetoric taken by these scholars demonstrates how the office worker comes to recognize “genre categories.” As Berkentotter and Huckin point out, the historical approach “enable[s] us to understand the functions of genre from the perspective of the actor who must draw upon genre knowledge to perform effectively” (2). To perform this historical analysis, Berkentotter and Huckin indicate that “[i]n particular, analysts should pay attention to ways in which genre users manipulate genres for particular rhetorical purposes” (2). In the case of this study, users are found in the job applications and in the etiquette books written by insiders for potential insiders.

An analysis of these job applications and etiquette books would be what Charles Bazerman has described as “[a] vision of systems of complex located literate activity constructed through typified actions – typified so that we are all to some extent aware of the form and force of these typified actions” (Systems 79). In coming to understand these typified actions,

we become more and more insiders capable of understanding even more inside information. Bazerman describes this process as one in which, “[a]s we become more informed and involved with these typified literate actions, we come to share a more precise set of functional meanings in relation to complex social systems, and we are able to grant value and consequential relations through the kinds of texts.” Significantly, these understandings are critical to the formation of a culture: “By using these typified texts we are able to advance our own interests and shape our meanings in relations to complex social systems, and we are able to grant value and consequence to the statements of others” (Systems 79).

A genre is not a static category accessed over and over again by people regardless of their historical situation. Instead, according to Bazerman in *Constructing Experience*:

[t]he second view of conceptual change, a sociological one, is concerned with how an entire community or social collective changes a shared concept. The problem of conceptual change from this perspective is only secondarily one of individuals—how individuals are enlisted into, socialized into, become committed to the changing concept. (150)

The figure of the office worker was a “changing concept” that had several dimensions, and I will argue that business etiquette books of the early office contributed to the shape of this new concept. These books present their advice as well-established rules that the reader has no reason to question. The books do not characterize trends as “new” but as the a priori fabric of seasoned office culture. I believe this stance by the etiquette books increases the likelihood that its audience will “commit” to the prescribed changes. I am arguing that the understanding of this particular example of rhetoric entails the thorough understanding of its

history, a point understood well by those involved with professional communication, like Bazerman, who contends that “[...] history frames both the rhetorical moment and the rhetorical universe” (Shaping 5). Historical context may also get at:

the different choices made in formulating knowledge under different conditions, the regularization of choices and contexts within communities, the modification of these regularities as they disperse through time and domain, and the implications of the rhetorical choices of individuals and communities. (Shaping 24)

Thus, the commitment to historical specificity in rhetorical studies underwrites the entire project to which the field of professional communication dedicates itself: the understanding of how knowledge is produced by the distinct communications within the genres deployed in a unique professional field. The historical context of these situationally appropriate responses provides even more insight, perhaps towards understanding how social factors affect genre development. To develop a more sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical situations underpinning professional communication, researchers must describe patterns that emerge across individual historical investigations. But to describe patterns, the historical investigations must first be individually executed. Thus, as Kitty Locker, et al. contend, we need “[m]ore studies of actual business communication practices within specific businesses and organizations” (Locker, et al. 125). The existence of these individual investigations would provide a basis from which the profession can construct what Joan Wallach Scott contends we need: a theoretical synthesis of descriptive case studies. It is exactly this kind of individual investigation that this dissertation aims to provide.

Articulating the Recursive Nature of Genre Building

A central notion to genre theory for professional communication scholars is the recursive nature of genre construction. Creating or solidifying genres is never a one-way equation. Carolyn Miller's view that genres are best understood as typified rhetorical actions emerging from day-to-day social activity has provided a basis for much subsequent theorizing about the relationship between genre and communication. Charles Bazerman argues that genres provide, at the same time, both a constraint on and an opportunity for social action. As he puts it, genres may form "important levers" in the "complex societal machine," but that is not to say that individuals exist simply as cogs in the machine. Dorothy Winsor characterizes this recursive formation of power as "[...] a system" being "[...] enacted by its participants [...]" (Genre 220) and notes that, "Even when we do find an exercise of power, we need to see power relationships in complex ways" (Genre 202).

In the same theoretical vein is sociologist Anthony Giddens's structuration theory,¹⁰ which has had an influence on many professional communication scholars, most notably Wanda Orlikowski and JoAnne Yates in "Genre Repertoire: The Structuring of Communicative Practices in Organizations." To Giddens, the enactment of social structures is never solely a top-down process, or as Orlikowski and Yates put it, "Such a recursive relationship between action and structure is central [...] to structuration theory" (541). Participants create social structures by acting within them using the organizational rules or genres to govern their behavior. In turn, the structure—the sum of these "stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough

¹⁰ Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

sites of social and ideological action [...] shape their operators” (Schryer, Records 204 and 208). This means in tracing the history of particular genres, “it is impossible to define an exact point” where “[...] a new genre has emerged” (545). For Giddens it is important to see structures as alive and evolving rather than just standing there impenetrable to their participants; he stresses agency and the fact that we have the power to influence and change the values or processes of structures and their genres. “Genres are, in fact, characterized by transformativity” (Schryer, Records 210). Participants are simultaneously reifying and modifying social structure. Or again to use Schryer’s terminology, “All genres have a complex set of relations with past texts and with other present texts: Genres come from somewhere and are transforming into something else” (Records 208).

Miller’s reconception of genres as typified rhetorical actions rather than textual forms, along with work by Bazerman in the same vein, has influenced the field of professional communication perhaps most significantly by providing a theoretical justification for redirecting our inquiry about writing practices and behaviors from “the art and excellence of rhetors and texts” (Genre 31) to the histories and cultures surrounding texts and rhetorical practices. As Bazerman explains, by locating ourselves and our discursive acts within the larger context of “[...] discursive systems [that] operate through generic turns,” we can best understand what we can and cannot achieve rhetorically at any particular moment, and how. An understanding of genre as social action shows us how our rhetorical acts are “bound to the symbolic and non-symbolic environment,” how texts interact with and are accountable to “representations within the generic system and states of affairs that extend beyond discourse

but are drawn into the discourse at various junctures in the system of generic activity” (Systems 99).

Because JoAnne Yates’ account of power in business is primarily from the top down, it can be seen as one-dimensional. However, there is little doubt that she is right to argue that businesses use genres to "control the growing business" (65); genres were created to serve particular purposes, but the genres themselves were treated as products of demand rather than producers of it: "The genres of internal communication that emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries evolved in response to new demands put on them by growth and by changing management philosophy, within the constraints of communication technologies" (100), a dynamic illustrated by the etiquette books and personnel records in my study.

Scholars already mentioned here, such as Carolyn Miller, Carol Berkenkotter, Tom Huckin, Dorothy Winsor, Charles Bazerman, Wanda Orlikowski, Catherine Schryer and JoAnne Yates, as well as others like David Russell and Greg Myers established important groundwork of genre study in professional and technical communication. By articulating the priorities and goals of genre study, this work has allowed genre theory to branch out to new sites of analysis across disciplines, as well as to sites of “popular” communication such as the World Wide Web.

Current Trends in Genre Research

In keeping with professional communication's trend of staying current with communication mediums, studies of "new" genres stemming from the digital age of publishing, on-line classrooms, and the World Wide Web have intensified in the last five years. Most recently, Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd,¹¹ for example, have used genre theory to study "blogging," a kind of online diary that continues to grow in popularity. Miller and Shepherd use blogs to analyze an often discussed binary in genre theory—public vs. private—because as the article points out, blogs "are addressed to everyone and at the same time to no one." The article also goes back to its rhetorical analysis roots by asking about genre and kairos, (timeliness) "Is there some synergy between this new genre and this particular cultural moment?" a question, in fact, I am seeking to answer about genres in the 1930s office place. Other current genre theorists have looked to the web for analysis as well, taking on Usenet groups, online documentation, and Information Technology, in general.¹² In "IText: Future Directions for Research on the Relationship Between Information Technology and Writing,"¹³ an all-star roster of RPC pioneers calls for the professional communication field to seek research projects on communication artifacts that are "at their core—the blend of IT

¹¹ Miller, C. R. & Shepherd, D. "Blogging as social action: a genre analysis of the weblog." Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs." Ed. Laura J. Gurak, Smiljana Antonijevic, Laurie Johnson, Clancy Ratliff, and Jessica Reymann. June 2004. 10 October 2006. <<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/>>.

¹² See for example, Inger Askehave, Anne Ellerup Nielsen, "Digital genres: a challenge to traditional genre theory. Sabrina Bonus, Susan Herring, Lois Scheidt and Elijah Wright "Beyond the Unusual: Weblogs as Genre." Diane Nutt and Diane Railton "The Sims: Real Life as Genre."

¹³ Geisler, C., Bazerman, C., Doheny-Farina, S., Gurak, L., Haas, C., Johnson-Eilola, J., Kaufer, D. S., Lunsford, A., Miller, C. R., Winsor, D. & Yates, J. (2001). IText: Future Directions for Research on the Relationship between Information Technology and Writing. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 15.3 (2001): 269-308.

and texts,” which they term “ITexts.” Wanda Orlikowski, whose work on organizational structure and communication has influenced professional communication, has turned to studying IT systems in organizations.

Other genre scholars continue to move across disciplines, most notably into medical discourse; Catherine Schryer et al.¹⁴ conducted a study of genres from the medical field (case studies and presentations) to analyze their role in creating medical students’ professional identities. Susan Popham’s¹⁵ work on medical records forms as “boundary genres” seeks to explore tensions between business, science, and medicine disciplinary boundary lines in patient care, and Ellen Barton¹⁶, “in an effort to establish a mutual understanding of professional practices” (109) analyzes the critical genre of prognosis in medicine. She took on the task of transcribing conversations between cancer patients and their oncologists when the patient received his or her prognosis and found, for example, when doctors enter the stage of “presenting treatment information” to a patient there are usually four steps: treatment recommendation, side effects, treatment plan, and invitation to trial (92). Barton knows that studying other disciplines—particularly science and medicine—often creates uncomfortable dynamics. When a professional thinks you are observing in order to criticize, his or her defensiveness can lead to battles. However, as scholars we must absorb these tensions,

¹⁴ Schryer, Catherine F. and Philippa Spoel. “Genre Theory, Health-Care Discourse, and Professional Identity Formation.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 19 (2005): 249-278.

¹⁵ Popham, Susan L. “Forms as Boundary Genres in Medicine, Science, and Business.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 19 (2005): 279-303.

¹⁶ Barton, Ellen. “Discourse Methods and Critical Practice in Professional Communication: The Front-Stage and Back-Stage Discourse of Prognosis in Medicine.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 18 (2004): 67 - 111.

because without studying genres in very personal, meaningful contexts we have no way to transform them for the better.

Interdisciplinary work in genre study makes the field of professional communication a more visible discipline in academics, thereby increasing its validity in fields that have historically considered English departments largely irrelevant to the “real” work of academics, but perhaps more importantly, interdisciplinarity makes it possible for genre scholars to move beyond theoretical political discourse into the practice of improving communication.

Extending genre study’s consideration of gender as an important variable—a process that has and will continue to produce many battles—is one such interdisciplinary move that creates opportunities to evaluate power in discourse.

PART II. USING GENDER AS A VARIABLE IN GENRE THEORY

In 1999¹⁷, 2002¹⁸ and 2006¹⁹, Isabelle Thompson (along with Elizabeth Overman Smith in 2002 and 2006) published articles in JBTC and JTWC studying the use of gender and feminism in Professional Communication studies. Using five major journals in the field as

17 Thompson, Isabelle. “Women and Feminism in Technical Communication. A Qualitative Content Analysis of Journal Articles Published in 1989 through 1997.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 13 (1999): 154-178.

18 Overman Smith, Elizabeth and Isabelle Thompson. “Feminist Theory in Technical Communication: Making Knowledge Claims Visible.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 16 (2002): 441-477.

19 Thompson, Isabelle and Elizabeth Overman Smith. “Women and Feminism in Technical Communication—An Update.” *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 36 (2006): 183-199.

her disciplinary marker,²⁰ Thompson counted the number of article titles in a nine-year span that contained any of a list of words she came up with having to do with gender.²¹ Her goal was to “[...] assess scholarly interest in women's studies and feminist theory” (Thompson “Women and Feminism in Technical Communication. A Qualitative Content Analysis of Journal Articles Published in 1989 through 1997” 155). Although her study has been criticized in some corners,²² for my purposes I am putting that debate aside to focus on the very basic assertion Thompson’s project illustrates: combining feminism and professional communication remains something to question. In fact, by her 2006 article, she finds that “[...] technical communication scholars’ interest in feminism and women’s issues has declined over the past 15 years” while making it clear, though, that “articles on the topic continue to be published” (Thompson and Overman Smith. “Women and Feminism in Technical Communication—An Update” 196).

Further, although most of the same themes about women and feminism identified in 1997 continue to appear, the previous focus on inclusion, with its faith that some aspects of culture and society are value-neutral, has changed to a focus on critique with its insistence that all aspects of human existence are contextualized and politicized. (196)

20 *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication (JTWC)*, and *Technical Communication (TC)*

21 female, feminist, gender, gendered, cross-gender, gender-neutral, sexual, sexes, sexism, sexist, and women

22 See, most notably, Bev Sauer’s “A comment on “Women and Feminism in Technical Communication: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Journal Articles Published in 1989 through 1997.”” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 13 (1999): 463-464.

Thompson's point is an important one. In this case, fewer articles can be seen as change for the better, because it means focus has moved to more nuanced studies involving feminism. Being left outside of the science classroom is not the central concern anymore; instead, it is about the field's broader consideration of gender as a sometimes volatile social construct as men and women navigate personal identities and public communication. My concern in this dissertation is genre study in professional communication, and I believe applying genre theory to gender projects gets at an important component in the evolution of genres. As a field, we study pedagogy and genre, developing professionals and genre, patients and genre, workers and genre, annual reports and genre, accident reports and genre, and so on. We do this because the study of genre needs to make itself relevant to communication as a whole. Gender is simply another site to consider.

My study of workplace communications is guided by feminist-informed generic methodology to produce findings relevant to the professional communication field. I am using generic theory to study texts produced in a distinctive historical time period—the mid 1930s—a time period important because it is part of the chaotic, evolving office place of the early 20th century. One contributing factor to this chaos leads to the third important aspect of my methodology: women. Gender plays an important role in my study because, quite simply, I am conducting a study of communication in the office, and by the mid 1930s women filled a lot of desks. Because of this study's use of gender, in disciplinary terms it is necessarily a feminist study. I want to take a moment to make clear what I mean by the term feminist.

The Weight of the Word

Feminism is unlike any other disciplinary term in that it immediately calls up not only 50 plus years of scholarly work, plural forms of itself (or “feminisms),” but also popular, political, and cultural explosions of meaning. Rightly or wrongly, no other discipline (the academic department itself I will refer to as “Women’s Studies”) connects so closely to “real world” fights for rights and equality. Despite the fact that the discipline of feminism has evolved enough to produce several feminisms, people have called up a one-dimensional feminism in the name of issues that seem reasonably connected to the idea of women’s rights: equal pay for women, teaching girls in math and science, and abortion rights. I would argue feminism has also been dragged into issues that should be completely divorced from Gloria Steinem and bra burning because one group or another wanted to saddle the issue with the negative weight the term feminism carries: the 2001 Andrea Yates’ “evil or ill” debate,²³ spousal abuse, and the 2006 Duke Lacrosse rape case.²⁴ Should feminists be more sympathetic than non-feminists to someone suffering from a mental illness? Feminism has been embroiled in the iconic culture wars of the last five decades and because of that it contains many nuances that cannot be summed up easily.

²³ Andrea Yates, a woman who suffered from crippling post-partum depression, killed her young children on June 20, 2001 by drowning them in their family bathtub. She was first convicted of first degree murder in 2002, but her conviction was later overturned on appeal. On July 26, 2006, a Texas jury ruled Yates to be not guilty by reason of insanity. Yates was consequently committed by the court to the North Texas State Hospital.

²⁴ The 2006 Duke University lacrosse team scandal began in March 2006 when Crystal Gail Mangum, an African-American stripper and escort, made false statements to police that she had been raped by three unidentified members of the Duke University men's lacrosse team. Magnum had been engaged to work a party held at the residence of two of the team captains, and she reported that the incident took place there.

My use of the term in the localized context of this dissertation is at its most general. I am consciously including gender as one component of my study, because it is “[...] a fundamental element of human life [...] and it is dramatically changing the form and content of knowledge about rhetoric” (Foss 151). My analysis considers the narratives that dominated the 1930s office for both men and women. “Our notions of what is feminine and what is masculine are socially constructed and are reflected in behaviors, beliefs, and social practice and organization” (192). Toril Moi says a feminist study is about discovering “[the] way discourse works to shape understandings of experience, self and history”(43) and Karen Foss argues that “Feminist criticism quite possibly could be considered more central to the analysis of rhetoric than almost any other method of criticism” (151). The study of rhetoric can only be enriched by complicating the lens through which we see it, and my particular investigation allows insight into the role gender plays in communication. Incorporating gender into a genre study allows me to ask, “How has gender been communicated through rhetorical artifacts?” (Foss 155). Looking at the etiquette handbooks offers insight into cultural definitions of gender, or a “culture’s conception of the traits and roles considered typical and desirable for males and females” (Foss 151).

Conclusion: Applying Theories of Gender

As a field, the history of women and technology has been at the forefront of transforming the history of women into a vital study; scholars like Margery Davies, Angel Kwolek-Folland, Amy Bix, Susan Strasser, and Sue Rosser²⁵ have considered the rhetorical weight of

²⁵ See: Blackwell, Elizabeth and Amy Sue Bix. *Pioneer Work In Opening The Medical Profession To Women*. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2005. Strasser, Susan. *Never Done: A History of American Housework*. New York:

language and its power to construct in their evaluation of women's relationship with technology, the academic sciences, and medicine. Taking off from there, genre theory can add to that transformation. "Like the effect of light refracting through a prism, the introduction of a new mode of analysis and new perspectives to a discipline can reveal a spectrum of possibilities that enrich the whole" (Foss 192).

Jeanne Herrick's 1999 article, "'And Then She Said': Office Stories and What They Tell Us about Gender in the Workplace" uses the terminology of narrative study, an approach which often overlaps with idea of studying genres. Her study speaks directly to the stories written by etiquette books about what makes a good woman and a good man by addressing the rhetorical relationship of gender, language, and power,

[...] gender is created, contested, reproduced, or transformed in the everyday interactions and discourse of women and men in the context of actual and specific work workplaces. Likewise, the relationship between gender and power is also locally constructed through the daily practices of each specific work site. (276)

This concentration of the local and specific is an important one to my study on several levels. First of all, the claims I make are about the unique setting of the 1930s office, for reasons I have explained prior to this. Local vs. global also comes up in discussing the "scope of vision" the gendered narratives allow. Women's vision did not go much past the end of the desk. Small, individual tasks were their job. Men's vision in the etiquette books went past the

Owl Books, 2000. Fox, Mary Frank, Deborah G. Johnson Sue V. Rosser, eds. *Women Gender and Technology*. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

desk and into the cosmos, as they were asked to assess their place in the universe before assessing their place at work.

Chapter Two's last task is to define three conceptions of gender Herrick references, terms important to my analysis: gender as a continuum²⁶, gender as a dichotomy/gender polarization, and gender as performance.²⁷ Gender as a continuum and gender as a dichotomy/gender polarization can be understood best as opposites. First, though, it is important to differentiate sex from gender. The term "sex" divides men and women based on genetic chromosomes and reproductive organs. Sex is defined by biology, while gender is defined by our personas and therefore has no defining essence. Gender as a continuum rejects the male vs. female dichotomy (or polarization) and instead contends there might be as many genders as there are people. We all fall somewhere along this continuum based on our behavior, or, how we "perform." Our performance is shaped by what clothing we wear (costume), enhancements we to our body (makeup), how we speak (pitch, tone, projections, animation) and what we say and do (script). "Gender...is not something we are or have but something we do, a complex and dynamic process that takes place in our daily social interactions" (Herrick 82). This terminology will be expanded upon in Chapters Four and Five where I will discuss how the gender narratives worked with the overall system of the 1930s office.

²⁶ Although "gender as a continuum" and "gender as a dichotomy" have been used by numerous scholars at different times, Herrick credits Sandra Lipsitz Bem with the use of the term, along with "gender polarization" from: Bem Lipsitz, Sandra. *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993

²⁷ From Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

My study seeks to enter into the conversation by emphasizing the role of gender in a historical study of office communication genres. A vital part of our social existence, gender has more to offer than has been asked of it so far, and while this does not mean all studies must include gender, I believe that genre theorists must explore ways gender matters to genre.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This project began with a history class about women and technology. At the same time I was reading *More Work for Mother*, Ruth Schwartz Cowan's history of "labor-saving" devices that caused more work for mother by raising expectations of cleanliness and meal preparation, a secretary in the Iowa State English Department showed me a 1937 secretarial etiquette handbook entitled *How to Be a Successful Secretary*. It gave instructions for being an effective office wife by listening to the boss' problems and making him as comfortable as possible at work. *How to Be a Successful Secretary* even suggested playing classical music in the boss' office on particularly stressful days. What began as a quaint book became the start of a broader study of 1930s office culture. After offering theoretical background for my study in Chapter Two, Chapter Three details my methods of collection and analysis in six parts:

- **Part I** begins with a brief history of the project and the reasoning behind the choice of data; it continues by spelling out the project's limitations.
- **Part II** details choosing the women's etiquette books for the analysis.
- **Part III** covers data collection of the men's etiquette books.
- **Part IV** discusses data collection for the personnel records.
- **Parts V and VI** delineate concrete data analysis concepts and methods for this genre study.

PART I: FINDING ANOTHER TEXTUAL ARTIFACT FROM THE 1930s

After seeking out other etiquette books from that era, I wrote a seminar paper for my history class conducting a rhetorical analysis of the secretarial handbooks. When the time came to expand the project to suit a dissertation I had a simple question: What other texts could complicate study of gender in the 1930s office?

Etiquette books constitute an “external” office text, because they were not authored by companies’ human resources departments but by authors who considered themselves business and/or etiquette experts. These were books women might seek outside the office in order to improve their standing inside the office. Gender narratives at play in the office were just as significant for men as they were for women. Narratives of masculinity do not sound as “oppressive” as the feminine ones do, but they still operate as a powerful force in the office culture; in fact, feminine gender narratives need masculine narratives to provide a foil. The foil gives the narratives clarity and distinction—qualities that strengthen their impact. Considering this, I added male etiquette books to my study.

To provide balance to the external texts, I extended the data collection to documents “internal” to the office--documents created by management and/or workers in everyday work. The initial research inquiry was designed to find an additional dimension to office communication— something quite different than the etiquette books. Arriving finally at the National Recovery Administration personnel records is detailed later in the chapter.

Limitations to the Project

Studying the etiquette books was limited by the availability of the books. Because the handbooks were 70 years old, they were simply difficult to find; the search, however the search was extensive enough to collect the most popular etiquette books. This reassures me that while I do not have every etiquette book I have the ones that had the most influence on the cultural narratives of gender, a contention that leads to my next limitation.

When I presented part of this study at a conference, a man commented that when he was in the Army there was a very thick manual handed out to everyone on the first day, along with an order to read it page by page. He did not read it and neither did most of the other men. This led him to ask how I knew these etiquette books were actually read and therefore as influential as I am claiming. My response to him at the time was to ask him, “While you were in the Army, did you ever leave the base at night because you felt like having a hamburger and a beer instead of cafeteria food?”

He laughed and said, “No, of course not. You can’t do that. I’d be AWOL. I’d be punished with midnight jogs and 500 pushups....or worse.”

And I said, “So even though you did not read the manual you knew the rules?” I have no way of knowing how many of these etiquette books were purchased by female office workers. Because many of them had multiple editions, and because writers like Marilyn Burke, Louise Hollister, and F.A. Faunce wrote more than one etiquette book, I believe a certain popularity

can be assumed. However, my findings do not hinge on documented occasions of women sitting down to read these etiquette books.

Rhetorical influence does not go only from author to reader. Even if I do not read an etiquette book on dining at an expensive, refined French restaurant, I know—like most people privileged to a certain class and social education—not to wear jeans and not to order a hot dog and fries when I get there. Narratives of socially-applauded behavior are dispersed through culture by various means—movies, magazines, television, popular music, newspaper articles, teachers, mothers, fathers, priests, peers, and so on. Etiquette is enforced by discipline imposed on violators by all of the above sources. The authors of these etiquette books wanted to be published, which required them to provide interesting advice in a new way, but at the same time they could not advocate behavior not already practiced in society; that would be too extreme. To be accepted, in some ways, is to be invisible, not unique. Etiquette books articulate a value system based on what has already been rewarded and praised. This value system is modeled to different degrees by those around us, and we mimic the behavior of the people we most admire. If a well-respected woman in my office comes in everyday wearing sensible heels and a tweed suit instead of a short skirt and a low-cut silk blouse, I might reshape by own wardrobe to match hers if my goal is to be perceived the way she is. Gender narratives cannot be concretely found any more than they can be concretely avoided.

Limitations to the personnel records are similar to the ones for the etiquette books. It would have been ideal to locate a decade of thoroughly organized, well-maintained personnel

records. However, because personnel records contain personal information, many private companies were reluctant to allow me access. Some companies seemed worried about what I might find in boxes no one had looked in for many years. Government records are a different story, though, which is how the National Recovery Administration became a research site.

Finally, it is important to note that the 1930s were a volatile time for nearly every American, and African-Americans were no different. Black men and women struggled to find good jobs with equal pay even more than whites did. At a time when everyone needed a job, minorities were not the government's first priority. There are similar issues involving class in the work force as well. As important as these issues are, they are beyond the scope of this study.

Excluding class and race from this study stems from a necessarily narrow focus, and not from a belief that class and race are insignificant cultural factors in the workplace.

PART II. DATA SELECTION METHODS: CHOOSING THE WOMEN'S

ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Countless etiquette books were published in the Twentieth Century. They covered everything from housekeeping and dinner party etiquette for women to general societal protocol for both men and women. Prior to 1930s, in fact, most of the etiquette books written for women covered primarily issues of social decorum and politeness. The ones that began to bring business issues to a female audience and continued to bring those same concerns to a male audience are my focus in this project. I narrowed the sample for analysis to ten of these handbooks. Both women's etiquette books and men's etiquette books are included in my analysis, but the process of finding them was different for each.

Differentiating between male etiquette books and female etiquette books was not difficult. For one thing, most of the women's etiquette books have the word "secretary" in their title used as a gendered term meaning "woman who works in an office." Female handbooks always use pictures of women in their illustrations, use the pronoun "she," and refer to men in the third person. Similarly, the images in the men's books are all of men's duties, men's clothing, and men in general. In one etiquette book I studied, there was a chapter that included women in their audience, but the rest of the book was about men only.

My search for etiquette books to analyze began with the Parks Library holdings at Iowa State. Parks Library contained fifteen books on business etiquette with women as their audience (see Table 3.1). According to their publication dates, there appeared to be an explosion in business etiquette books written expressly for women new to the office. The 1930s, then, provided a narrow focus of one decade to study office communication. First, however, I wanted to check to see how common the 1930s books were in terms of library presence. To determine the prevalence of these fifteen books I conducted a search to see if the initial fifteen books were held by nine other major university holdings:

1. [Iowa State University]
2. University of Missouri at Columbia
3. University of Missouri at Kansas City
4. University of Kansas
5. University of Iowa
6. University of Chicago
7. New York University
8. University of California at Los Angeles
9. Harvard University
10. University of Texas at Austin

Table 3.1. Women's Etiquette Books in Iowa State University's Library Holdings

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	YEAR
<i>The Business of Business Etiquette</i>	Nella Braddy	1929
<i>The Personal Secretary</i>	Frederick Nichols	1934
<i>Standard Handbook for Secretaries</i>	Lois Irene Hutchinson	1936
<i>Secretarial Office Practice</i>	Foster W. Loso, Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agnew	1937
<i>Profits from Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette</i>	Mary Alden Hopkins	1937
<i>How to Be a Successful Secretary</i>	Louise Scott Hollister	1937
<i>Modern Secretarial Training</i>	S.J. Wanous	1938
<i>Secretarial Efficiency</i>	F.A. Faunce and F.G. Nichols	1939
<i>How To Get a Secretarial Job</i>	Louise Hollister Scott	1942
<i>The Private Secretary: A College Text</i>	John Robert Gregg	1944
<i>Secretaries Who Succeed</i>	Esther R. Becker	1947
<i>The Complete Secretary</i>	Patricia Flynn	1950
<i>Complete Secretary's Handbook</i>	Lillian Doris and Besse May Miller	1951
<i>Manners in Business</i>	Elizabeth Gregg MacGibbon	1954
<i>The Executive Secretary: Techniques For Success In a Secretarial Career</i>	Marilyn C. Burke	1959

The university libraries to search were chosen based on geography. The first six schools are large, public, state universities similar to Iowa State University. The last four university libraries extend my search to the two coasts as well as to the middle south with Texas. The concentration is on the Midwest, but by expanding my search I could see if the popularity of these books could be traced beyond the Midwest. Tables 3.2 and 3.2A show detailed results of library searches.

Table 3.2. Book in Library, Yes or No. Analyzed Handbooks Highlighted in GrayISU²⁸ mobius²⁹ KU³⁰ IA³¹ CHI³² NYU³³ UCLA³⁴ HARV³⁵ UT³⁶ TOTAL

<i>The Business of Business Etiquette.</i> 1929. Nella Braddy	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	In 1/10
<i>The Personal Secretary.</i> 1934. Frederick Nichols	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	In 7/10
<i>Standard Handbook for Secretaries.</i> 1936. Lois Irene Hutchinson	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	in 10/10
<i>Secretarial Office Practice.</i> 1937. Foster W. Loso, Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agnew	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	in 10/10
<i>Profits from Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette.</i> 1937. Mary Alden Hopkins	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	in 6/10
<i>How to Be a Successful Secretary.</i> 1937. Louise Scott Hollister	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	In 5/10
<i>Modern Secretarial Training.</i> 1938. (S.J. Wanous)	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	in 4/10
<i>Secretarial Efficiency.</i> 1939. F.A. Faunce and F.G. Nichols	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	In 8/10

²⁸ Iowa State University²⁹ University of Missouri System: University of Missouri-Columbia and MU at Kansas City³⁰ University of Kansas³¹ University of Iowa³² University of Chicago³³ New York University³⁴ University of California-Los Angeles³⁵ Harvard University³⁶ University of Texas-Austin

Table 3.2A. Book in University Library Catalogue, Yes or No.

	ISU	mobius	KU	UI	CHI	NYU	UCLA	HARV	UT	TOTAL
<i>How To Get a Secretarial Job.</i> 1942. Louise Hollister Scott	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	in 1/10
<i>The Private Secretary: A College Text.</i> 1944. John Robert Gregg	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	in 7/10
<i>Secretaries Who Succeed.</i> 1947. Esther R. Becker	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	in 8/10
<i>The Complete Secretary.</i> 1950. Patricia Flynn	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	in 2/10
<i>Complete Secretary's Handbook.</i> 1951. Lillian Doris and Besse May Miller	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	in 7/10
<i>Manners in Business</i> 1954. Elizabeth Gregg MacGibbon	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	in 7/10
<i>The Executive Secretary: Techniques For Success In a Secretarial Career.</i> 1959. Marilyn C. Burke	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	in 4/10

After doing the inventory check, I found that the two most popular books were published in 1937, and the rest of the 1930s books were in more than half of the libraries search. This was the most discernible pattern I found in terms of popularity, and it made the decision of narrowing the study down to the 1930s office an easy one. Table 3.3 lists the five etiquette handbooks I settled on for analysis in this dissertation.

Table 3.3. Women's Etiquette Books Analyzed in Study

<i>Standard Handbook for Secretaries</i>	Lois Irene Hutchinson	1936
<i>Profits from Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette.</i>	Mary Alden Hopkins	1937
<i>How to Be a Successful Secretary</i>	Louise Scott Hollister	1937
<i>Secretarial Office Practice</i>	Foster W. Loso, Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agnew	1937
<i>Secretarial Efficiency</i>	F.A. Faunce and F.G. Nichols	1939

PART III. DATA COLLECTION METHODS: CHOOSING THE MEN'S ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Male etiquette books from the 1930s were difficult to find. Most likely this is because, in general, men and women were at different stages in their office enculturation. Men were not supposed to need basic skills handbooks in the 1930s. As the new gender in town, women were viewed as needing instruction. Women needed guidance. Because of this, the process for finding male etiquette books for the study was different than the process for the female etiquette books. In Iowa State's holdings, for example, there were only three etiquette books aimed at men. Instead of just checking those three book titles in other libraries, I compiled a list of as many men's etiquette books I could find in any of the ten libraries. There was a total of eleven books from the same libraries I used in locating the women's books.

Physically locating those eleven books for analysis proved to be even harder. They were simply not as available as the women's etiquette books. In the 40 used book databases I

searched for men's etiquette books, I found several copies of the women's etiquette books but no men's books. Although there is no way to know definitively if my experience in locating these books reflects the readership or popularity of the books, it is my contention is that it illustrates that men were not viewed as needing as much direction. Of those eleven titles on the library shelves, I could gain physical access to only eight (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Men's Etiquette Located

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	YEAR
<i>The Business Man's Encyclopedia Vols. 1-4</i>	A.W. Shaw Company	1917
<i>Success in College and Business</i>	Donald S. Bridgman	1928
<i>The Young Man in Business</i>	Howard Lee Davis	1931
<i>The Young Man Entering Business</i>	Orison Swett Marden	1934
<i>The Correct Thing: A Guide of Etiquette for Young Men</i>	William O. Stevens	1934
<i>The Ten Essentials of Business Success</i>	David S. Beasley	1937
<i>Personality Development; a self-teaching course, comprising health, posture, dress, grooming, voice and speech, conversation, social and business etiquette, self-confidence, poise, living and working with others, acquiring background, improvement of mind and character, achieving success and happiness</i>	Estelle B. Hunter	1939
<i>Rules for Success in Business</i>	William Feather	1941

To narrow the list of eight books down to five I again conducted a search for the titles in the ten libraries chosen for the women's etiquette books. See Table 3.5 for details of the presence of the etiquette books in the libraries. As with the women's etiquette books, the books that showed up the most in the library holdings were the etiquette books published in the 1930s. Table 3.6 contains the five etiquette books analyzed for this study.

Table 3.5. Male Etiquette Books (Handbooks chosen for analysis marked in gray)

ISU mobius KU UI CHI NYU UCLA HARV UT TOTAL

	ISU	mobius	KU	UI	CHI	NYU	UCLA	HARV	UT	TOTAL
<i>Rules for Success in Business.</i> William Feather, 1938.	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	5/10
<i>Success in College and Business</i> Donald S. Bridgman, 1937.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	1/10
<i>The Young Man in Business.</i> Howard Lee Davis, 1931.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	7/10
<i>The Ten Essentials of Business.</i> <i>Success.</i> David Beasley, 1937	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	1/10
<i>Personality Development; a self-teaching course...</i> Estelle B. Hunter, 1939.	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	5/10
<i>The Business Man's Encyclopedia Vols. 1-4.</i> A.W. Shaw. Company, 1917.	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	1/10
<i>The Young Man Entering Business.</i> Orison Swett Marden, 1944.	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	5/10
<i>The Correct Thing A Guide of Etiquette for Young Men.</i> William O. Stevens, 1934.	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	5/10

Table 3.6. Men's Etiquette Books Chosen for Analysis.

TITLE	AUTHOR(S)	YEAR
<i>Success in College and Business</i>	Donald S. Bridgman	1928
<i>The Young Man in Business</i>	Howard Lee Davis	1931
<i>The Young Man Entering Business</i>	Orison Swett Marden	1934
<i>The Correct Thing: A Guide of Etiquette for Young Men</i>	William O. Stevens	1934
<i>Personality Development; a self-teaching course, comprising health, posture, dress, grooming, voice and speech, conversation, social and business etiquette, self-confidence, poise, living and working with others, acquiring background, improvement of mind and character, achieving success and happiness</i>	Estelle B. Hunter	1939

PART IV. DATA SELECTION METHODS: CHOOSING PERSONNEL RECORDS

Although I made 35 inquiries to businesses, research libraries, and archives all over the country for access to their personnel records, the most detailed and productive response I got was from United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Most likely this is because government records are available to the public as part of an open, democratic government, whereas private companies have a responsibility to safeguard their records from public view—even records as far back as the 1930s.

The records that matched my inquiry were not that great in number, but because they were a product of the National Recovery Administration they had an added dynamic. Boxes 69 and 70, the two boxes included in my analysis—contained over 300 documents from Records 9 (records of the National Recovery Administration)—included 75% of the personnel records

at the NARA archives in Kansas City.³⁷ They are stored in Kansas City, MO at the NARA regional office. Documents in Record 9 include the following:

- women's application materials
- job descriptions
- payroll lists
- personal letters
- correspondence between different levels in the government hierarchy

Because the records are from a governmental agency, I cannot claim these records are representative of all office work of the time. The personnel records from a private corporation could have very different content. I would argue, however, that my analysis is broad enough that the experiences of women employed by the NRA were similar to those of other office workers of that era. Below I will give a short history of the records I had access to, and explain why I chose National Recovery Administration records to analyze.

NARA's Central Plains Region (Kansas City)

The bulk of National Archives and Records Administration records is located in Washington D.C., but there are also 41 regional offices around the country. I decided on Kansas City's facility for two reasons. First, it was the closest to my location at Iowa State and therefore easy to reach; this was a consideration factoring in my time and financial resources. Second,

³⁷ 75% is an estimate based on looking through 25 boxes at the NARA. Five other boxes (besides 69 and 70) were marked "Personnel" but they all contained various newspaper clippings, inventory sheets for a South Dakota factory, and correspondence dated 1946 from an Omaha lumber company. Two other folders were marked, "FERA manuals ONLY" and contained job ads and 20 salary lists. Because of this confused labeling I do not want to claim folders 69 and 70 make up all the personnel records in the NARA collection.

this facility housed records from the Midwest, which includes Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, which paralleled my search for the etiquette books.

Exploring the archives began by a search through 25 boxes suggested by the archivist who knew my research interest. Since I had no clear idea of what was in the boxes, I skimmed very broadly for records pertaining to employment. Each box contained anywhere between one and 100 individual folders depending on what documents survived, according to the NARA archivist. There was no global organization system to these documents, most likely because it was difficult to group similar documents by just glancing. In other words, the formats were varied: some sheets had no heading, and some forms had nothing at all to do with the NRA. There were approximately five different kinds of documents in a folder labeled “Report of Salaries” none of which had anything to do with salary. As a result, there were piles of various kinds of documents, sometimes arranged by state (Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa), sometimes by an individual employee’s name, and sometimes arranged by type of document (inventory form, application materials). Among all of these folders, boxes 69 and 70 from Record 9 (the National Recovery Administration³⁸) contained the most concentrated selection of personnel records. These two boxes were also the most cohesive collection of texts in terms of format. Because of this, my analysis of the NARA records was narrowed to these two boxes. Tables 3.7 and 3.8 below detail the contents of folders 69 and 70, respectively.

³⁸ The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which spawned the National Recovery Administration, is introduced at length in Chapter Five where these records are analyzed.

**Table 3.7. Records of the National Recovery Administration
Record Group 9, Box 69, Row 15**

Folder number	Doc. #'s (# of pages)	General Contents of Folder
1	1-12 (12)	Mildred Titzel annual leave
2	13-39 (27)	Full application packet Bosses communicating over salary, hiring, promotion
3	40-45 (6)	Report of NRA Field Employees
6	46-53 (8)	Blank application form Per diem request form Flow chart of positions
7	54-58 (5)	Background memo on employee Moses Smith
8	59-63 (5)	Request from employee for reference Reference Letter from national office concerning NRA codes Job Description Question
10	64-75 (12)	Gwen Geech application/request for transfer Letters of approval for request Job Description Questionnaire
11	No docs	N/A
12	76-81 (6)	Thelma Johnson application materials
14	82-93 (12)	Hazel Webber application materials
15	94-97 (4)	Roy Wilson application materials Job Description Questionnaire
16	98 (1)	Letter saying John Gross has job
17	99-109 (11)	Agnes Craft application materials Job Description Questionnaire
21	119-124 (6)	Lucille Smalley application materials Job Description Questionnaire
22	125-138 (14)	Mary Roche materials Job Description Questionnaire
24	139-146 (8)	Norman Guster materials Job Description Questionnaire

**Table 3.8. Records of the National Recovery Administration
Record Group 9, Box 70, Row 15**

Folder number	<i>Doc. #'s</i> (# of pages)	General Contents of Folder
1	147-151 (4)	Beverly Brown application Internal memos about Beverly Brown
3	152-189 (38)	Male application materials Letters of reference Reponses from A.F. Cook
4	190-291(102)	Letters, application forms
6	292-314 (23)	Transfers
7	315-320 (6)	Inventory
8	321-325 (5)	Reclassification
9	326-331 (6)	Layoffs, salaries, job lists
10	332-335 (4)	Layoffs, salaries
11	336-343 (8)	Future of NRA
12	344-346 (3)	Salaries
12A	347-351 (5)	List of positions, promotion

Data Analysis Methods and Concepts

Parts IV and V below detail the analysis of this archival data and they each do it in two parts. The first stage of the data analysis was making initial sense of the documents, based on close reading of the documents, organizing them based on format, and investigating their overall content. The second stage of data analysis involved making meaning out of the documents in terms of genre theory, a process explained in depth for each artifact.

PART V. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS FOR ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Analyzing the etiquette books began with the Table of Contents in each book. For every chapter in each etiquette book I came up with a descriptive word to represent the overall

topic of that chapter. For the most part it was obvious from the chapter title itself (writing a proper letter, wearing clothes that are flattering to you, correct posture) although there were some more obscure (special skills, being an asset). After labeling each chapter with a topic (dress style, spelling, letter writing, personal hygiene, flower arrangement, etc.) I compiled all of these topics into a list to find similarities across books. I worked to find larger, more meaningful categories that would begin to get at the priorities of the etiquette book writers in terms of content. For example, I combined a chapter about lipstick was with a chapter about mascara and eye shadow into the larger category of makeup. Then, makeup was grouped with hairstyle to form yet another category with a larger common denominator (grooming) between the smaller categories. Eventually grooming and dress style were dissolved into the larger category of physical appearance.

I judged a topic's importance by how much textual space was spent on it in comparison to others. Flower arrangement, for example, was discussed prominently in one book, very briefly in another book, and not at all in the rest of the books. Because of that it was considered a small subcategory eventually absorbed into the "Office Technical Skills" division. This process of dissolving smaller categories into larger ones led me finally to the following overall categories that I believe most fully represent the value system that the etiquette books uphold through the advice they dispense:

- Vision
- Physical Appearance
- Office Technical Skills

- Business and Social Etiquette
- Morality and Personhood

After the category of “vision” the etiquette books’ categories of value are listed from most “impersonal” (e.g. alphabetizing correctly, answering the phone with the proper greeting) to most “personal” (belief in God, religious affiliation). In other words, the most impersonal of the topics might be considered more standard content for a business handbook. If the business etiquette books covered only office technical skills and professionalism, I think they could be understood as textbooks or teaching tools. Giving instruction on impersonal aspects of the office creates an experienced teacher (the author)/novice student (the reader) dynamic. Asking businessmen if they believe God supersedes free will (it is only the men’s books that bring up the subject of faith) or telling women to do their best balancing act between “friendly and flirtatious” and “capable office worker” creates a paternal/maternal to child dynamic. The narrative categories I have articulated for these etiquette books reflect the fact that the books extend beyond simple business instruction. I believe it is because the books address the entire being of a person (actions, thoughts, looks, morals) under the category of “etiquette” that these handbooks can be read as creators of gender narratives within the business world.

Genre Application and Genre Participation

Before moving on to the NRA personnel records, I will describe the second stage of analysis for the etiquette books. Doing so requires an introduction to some methodological terminology. Karen Foss says, “A method is simply a way of gaining perspective on the

artifact; it is a vehicle, a lens, or a tool to use in examining the artifact in order to answer the question being asked” (Foss 17). To talk about the tools of analysis I used in approaching all of the data, I turn to Foss’ terminology for two important terms: *Genre Application and Genre Participation* (Foss 114). *Genre Application*, which I will apply to the etiquette books, seeks to understand the rhetorical work a genre is doing by applying “a generic model to particular rhetorical artifacts in order to assess them” (Foss 114). Studying several examples of a genre together allows patterns to emerge, and those patterns offer insight into the genre. *Generic Participation*, a concept important to understanding the varied application materials, means testing “a specific rhetorical artifact against a genre to discover if it participates in that genre” (114). After explaining what Genre Application offers an analysis of the etiquette books, Part VI describes analysis of the application materials and Job Description Questionnaires.

Genre Application and the Etiquette Books

In approaching the etiquette books I decided to consider them an already intact genre. All ten of the etiquette books I analyzed shared format, content, and goals— a conclusion supported, in general, by the similarities in topics and more specifically by the authors’ introductions to the books. Treating these books as a genre allowed me to attend to the rhetoric they used.. “The artifact,” in this case an etiquette book, “is seen as representative of other members of a rhetorical class [etiquette books in general] that can tell us something about the nature and function of rhetoric in that class” (Foss 6). The question with the etiquette books was about their rhetorical power in office enculturation. What was the action of this genre as a whole in the context of an emerging corporate culture in the 1930s?

PART VI. DATA ANALYSIS FOR PERSONNEL RECORDS

In first considering the personnel records as a whole, my goal was to simply find similarities in format among the mass of disorganized documents I had. I accomplished this by reviewing each folder and recording general observations. I relied on both qualitative and quantitative assessments, meaning I not only asked what kind of text each document contained, and what its purpose might be in an office context, but I also made piles of documents based on format, headings, and overall structure. Application forms went into a pile, application letters into another, job questionnaires in another, etc. I counted the number in each pile in the hope of seeing which kinds of documents offered me the most in terms of 1930s office culture.

The records I found in this collection were rich and varied. As the tables detail, there were several different kinds of documents—memos, telegrams, applications, application letters, personal notes, inventory sheets, salary records, transfer applications—and each of them had at least one match. That is, each form had been duplicated at least once. That was my first organization of the documents. I found matches between formats, grouped those together, and gave them a category label (handwritten application letter, letter with resume, Job Description Questionnaires). There were 20 different formats to the documents. Since all twenty of them could not be assessed meaningfully I chose the two formats that had the most examples. In addition to these two largest groups, For closer analysis, then, there are two categories:

- 1) **Application Documents:** Any documents that could be classified as application documents by either their language and/or format. Application forms were very easy to put in this category. Personal notes written on scrap paper were more difficult. From this category I created subcategories of : handwritten note for application, typed note of application, application form and/or resume.

- 2) **Job Description Questionnaires:** Documents that appear to have been designed to classify jobs in terms of task. More importantly, they are documents that asked the employees to do task breakdowns by percentage.

Genre Participation and the Application Materials

For the application materials, I was guided by Foss' term Genre Participation. What I had was a group of 100 documents that could all be considered, in some way, forms of application. Therefore, my question of each kind of application: Do they participate in the genre of the job application or is their format so far from what we consider the norm that they must be ruled out of that category? I first defined what an application does. What are its characteristics, expectations in format, and goals? Secondly, do the application materials from the NRA contain these characteristics? My goal was to decide whether each of the applications, in whatever form, was successful. "Does it fulfill perceived situational demands?" (Foss 118) or does it contain, "violations of expectation" (Foss 118)? Understanding that "certain types of situations provoke similar needs and expectations among audiences and thus call for particular kinds of rhetoric" (Foss 111), I began by asking what an application for a job does and if these NRA materials do the same thing. Could I

“discover commonalities in rhetorical patterns” (Foss 111) in letters written by women that, at first glance, did not conform to business writing protocol?

Genre Application and Job Questionnaires

As with the etiquette books, I decided there was a discernible genre in terms of format and action in the Job Description Questionnaires. There was a specialized sheet to fill out with precise directions for completion. Again the question then is what does the action of this genre mean? How does this genre fit into the 1930s office I have described?

Conclusion

This chapter has explained data collection methods and data analysis methods for this study of the 1930s office place. As I have noted, there are limitations to the collection and scope of my data. The analysis of the data is performed next in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four is about the etiquette books and the narratives one can discern by looking at the categories of advice. Chapter Five approaches the NRA personnel records by dividing them into two subcategories: application materials and Job Description Questionnaires.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS: CONSTRUCTING GENDER NARRATIVES THROUGH ETIQUETTE

A SECRETARY'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. THOU SHALT RESPECT THYSELF.
2. THOU SHALT NEVER APPEAR MORE CLEVER THAN THY EMPLOYER.
3. THOU SHALT RESPECT THY SKILLS.
4. THOU SHALT RESPECT THY EMPLOYER'S POSITION.
5. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE UNTO THYSELF THE IMPORTANCE OF THY EMPLOYER'S POSITION.
6. THOU SHALT NOT SHOW ANGER OR ANNOYANCE.
7. THOU SHALT NOT INDULGE IN SELF-PITY.
8. THOU SHALT NOT GOSSIP.
9. THOU SHALT NOT OPENLY COVET ANOTHER'S POSITION.
10. THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY EMPLOYER'S WIFE'S HUSBAND.

The Complete Secretary (13)

A bath or shower every morning is a great aid, not only to personal appearance, but also to personal efficiency. Of course, it takes a few extra minutes from the morning "time budget" but will amply repay its devotees in increased daintiness and alertness.

The Secretary's Encyclopedia (47)

Although they do not mind telling a girl her work should be better, that she should be more punctual...executives delay and often evade telling a girl that there is about her an unpleasant odor.

How to Be a Successful Secretary (56)

Gossip is usually done without malicious intent; but too frequently it causes ill feeling, if not actual damage.

Secretarial Office Practice (87)

Observe common table manners. You should not talk with your mouth full, or borrow someone else's spoon or cup without permission.

Complete Secretary's Handbook (55)

One should speak in a natural voice and pronounce each word distinctly, being careful that the lips are directly in front and close to the transmitter.

Modern Secretarial Training (12)

The World demands Men Who Know

Personality Development... (93)

A man should not routinely do a routine job...But if he's going to advance he must do that other day's work of preparation for wider opportunities and then evolve opportunities.

Personality Development... (92)

No man should be guilty of wearing conspicuous jewelry, for this is an indication of extremely bad taste.

Personality Development... (101)

A man's career is worth planning. Do not place it "on the lap of the Gods."

The Young Man in Business (47, 54)

The above excerpts are examples of typical advice offered by secretarial etiquette handbooks of the 1930s. The first four excerpts are from etiquette books aimed at female office workers, while the last four can be found in etiquette books aimed at men. The differences and similarities between excerpts like these are a primary point of discussion in this chapter. Chapter Four's goal is to illustrate how these etiquette books, as a cohesive genre, helped construct the gender narratives that played an integral part of the development of a coherent corporate culture in the 1930s office.

In order to understand women's place in the early office, historians have turned to analyses of the post-WWI economy (Davies, Hartman Strom, and Rotella); but recognizing that the economy does not give us the complete picture, others have looked at wider aspects of culture. These historians recognize that there were many factors that affected women in the office, such as office technology, the very debate about women's work in the office, and Scientific Management theories.

I argue in this chapter that another factor to consider is professional communication. I argue that one genre of professional communication, the secretarial handbooks of the 1930s, creates gender narratives that contribute to a cohesive corporate culture in the 1930s office. The discussion of the handbooks demonstrates the degree to which the handbooks, as a form of professional communication, employ gender-specific rhetorical categories to create the woman office worker and the male office worker. The genre of the professional etiquette handbooks called into existence gendered subjects tailored to be management-friendly in the office environment of the 1930s.

In previous chapters I have discussed applying genre theory using gender as a key element for analysis to understand the 1930s as a beginning point for corporate culture. When "[...] we ascribe socially constructed 'feminine' characteristics to women and socially constructed 'masculine' characteristics to men, along with activities each sex pursues" (Rothschild 193), stories are written that define gender roles; narratives create cultural norms and expectations. Gender narratives, at times guided by strict gender boundaries, contribute to a cohesive culture where roles are filled by its participants. In the 1930s office, narratives of gender

were very clearly differentiated, suggesting, for example, that men should carry themselves with confidence but women should eschew confidence in favor of politeness and agreeability lest they be perceived as manly. I will show how the content of these etiquette books both reflects and creates these strictly defined gender roles. This theory assumes a social constructionist model of gender and language, which “[...] suggests that women, like all people, read the social cues for gender in any given social and communicative context and act accordingly [...]” (Herrick 280). It also suggests that gender is dialogically constructed; conformity and resistance play off one another, and influence radiates from and in all directions. This dialogic process is a main factor in comparing the female etiquette books with the male etiquette books. One cannot be fully analyzed without the other, and Chapter Four offers this analysis in four parts:

- **Part I** provides an overview of the handbooks as a coherent genre.
- **Part II** offers a rhetorical context for the 1930s office by reviewing the technological, economic and socio-cultural conditions that invited women to join the office.
- **Part III** examines the factors that limited women’s advancement once in the office, including the debate over women working in the business world, and the influence of Scientific Management.
- **Part IV** explains the work of the etiquette books by illustrating their content in terms of definitive categories of influence.

PART I. OVERVIEW OF THE ETIQUETTE BOOKS AS A COHERENT GENRE

As I detailed in Chapter Three, in analyzing the etiquette books I approached them as an already existing genre. All ten of the etiquette books I analyzed shared format, title key words, content, and goals—a conclusion supported by the similarities in topics and more concretely by the authors' introductions to the books.

For example, Table 4.1 below lists the titles of the etiquette books used in this study. Even a glance at the book titles reveals commonalities in key words within each set of books. For example, four of the women's etiquette books (*Standard Handbook for Secretaries*, *How to Be a Successful Secretary*, *Secretarial Office Practice*, *Secretarial Efficiency*) use some form of the word "secretary" in their titles—secretarial, secretary, and secretaries. None of the men's etiquette books use the word secretary in any form in their title (*Success in College and Business*, *The Young Man in Business*, *The Young Man Entering Business*, *The Correct Thing: A Guide of Etiquette for Young Men*, *Personality Development; a self-teaching course...*). Instead, the men's books emphasize more general title words such as "young men" and "business." Because of this, I believe the label "secretary" is being used synonymously with "woman," meaning that in the context of the 1930s etiquette book when one refers to an office worker as "secretary" one is necessarily referring to a female employee. Men worked as secretaries in the office, but if one looks at the assumed audience for these etiquette books, by the 1930s that job was more likely to be filled by a woman. At the very least, regardless of the actual job, the label "secretary" necessarily referred to a woman. If this was not the case, then a book entitled, *How to Be a Successful Secretary* would not exclusively contain material pertaining to women, or if it did it would be entitled

How to Be a Successful Female Secretary. From this, one can see that just as technologies such as the typewriter became gendered, so did job titles. This meant that the job of “secretary” would be less attractive to a man in the office, because it was assumed to be a woman’s job.

The men’s books address their intended audience quite definitively—young men— but at the same time the book titles do not limit their readers’ role in the office by referring to a delimiting job label. Three of the men’s etiquette books refer to their audience literally in their title, and *Success in College and Business* assumes an audience young enough to be transitioning from college to the workplace, which is a category that could also be referred to as “young men.” The men’s book titles also refer more generally to “business” rather than the individual job of secretary, from the start suggesting a wider range of possible roles for men. The titles also illustrate clear parallels in contents among the women’s etiquette handbooks and the men’s etiquette handbooks. None of these titles suggests a significant variation in the overall form and function of the office etiquette handbook genre popular in the 1930s. Because of that, my research interest lies in the rhetorical content and work of the books rather than their development as a coherent genre.

Table 4.1. Business Etiquette Handbooks Analyzed in this Study.

ETIQUETTE BOOKS FOR WOMEN		
<i>Standard Handbook for Secretaries</i>	Lois Irene Hutchinson	1936
<i>Profits from Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette.</i>	Mary Alden Hopkins	1937
<i>How to Be a Successful Secretary</i>	Louise Scott Hollister	1937
<i>Secretarial Office Practice</i>	Foster W. Loso, Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agnew	1937
<i>Secretarial Efficiency</i>	F.A. Faunce and F.G. Nichols	1939
ETIQUETTE BOOKS FOR MEN		
<i>Success in College and Business</i>	Donald S. Bridgman	1928
<i>The Young Man in Business</i>	Howard Lee Davis	1931
<i>The Young Man Entering Business</i>	Orison Swett Marden	1934
<i>The Correct Thing: A Guide of Etiquette for Young Men</i>	William O. Stevens	1934
<i>Personality Development; a self-teaching course, comprising health, posture, dress, grooming, voice and speech, conversation, social and business etiquette, self-confidence, poise, living and working with others, acquiring background, improvement of mind and character, achieving success and happiness</i>	Estelle B. Hunter	1939

If “genres are the intellectual scaffolds on which community-based knowledge is constructed,” as Berkenkotter and Huckin claim, then the etiquette books are one scaffold on which gender role formation is developed. (24) Treating these books as a genre allowed me to attend to the rhetoric their authors used to construct gender narratives in the 1930s business world. I considered each book as “[...] representative of other members of a rhetorical class [...]” (Foss 6), in this case, etiquette books in general. Looking at the etiquette books this way “[...] can tell us something about the nature and function of rhetoric

in that class” (Foss 6). What was the work of this genre as a whole in the context of an emerging corporate culture in the 1930s?

The genre of etiquette books contains patterns across its members, although it is important to note, as Herrick does, that patterns are not the same as stereotypes. “Although patterns describe recurrent ways of behaving or communicating by individuals in a distinct social group or culture, they are flexible and open to variability and change” (Herrick 276). In other words, just because I am articulating patterns in these etiquette books does not mean I think all women reacted the same to gender rules. By exploring the narratives created by the 1930s office etiquette books, I am not arguing for a monolithic, stable picture of the way men and women comported themselves in the office on a daily basis. I am arguing neither that these narratives represent a premeditated, overarching conspiracy by the powers-that-be, nor that the narratives represent a conscious managerial theory of operation. These narratives did rhetorical work in the 1930s office by contributing to the look and shape of the roles workers inhabited. Narratives—like genres—inform, shape, and transform one other constantly, and the office place narratives of gender are no different. The female gender in the pages of the etiquette books served as a foil to the male gender on display in the etiquette books. Their ideal characteristics are defined in reference to one another, and because of this they create one another, a fact illustrated by the strict, exactly opposite gender rules presented. Gender roles are never more clear than in text.

PART II. A RHETORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Historians of technology (e.g., Davies, Hartman Strom, and Rotella) have noted that the early office maintained a clear division between the male “higher ups” and “the girls” at the bottom. These scholars detail the history and circumstances of this hierarchy. Because Davies, Hartman Strom, Rotella, and others, were among the first scholars to look in detail at the role of women in the office, I provide a brief account of their work. These historians’ accounts of the role of women in early office culture foreground the economic explanation for the limited possibilities women had for advancement.

Women worked in business offices as early as the 1880s, but by the 1930s the shape of the modern office had stabilized. According to Margery Davies’ account, there were several reasons for the influx of women into the office place. First of all, following WWI companies needed to keep better and more extensive records; suddenly a large number of workers were needed to maintain these records. In addition, since more men were in managerial positions, office flow charts took on a different look. Second, more workers were needed on the bottom rung of the hierarchy, and women filled that role well. (Davies 56)). The basic requirement for secretarial work was “literacy,” and at this time more young women were high school educated and therefore qualified. Women came cheaper than men did. Women seemed a perfect fit in these “smaller” roles, and since office managers were creating the roles of the new office as they went, the newer, lower-paid positions were not yet defined as “men’s.” Third, this meant women did not have to be perceived as “taking over men’s work,” a view that would have created tension in societal discourse.

Rotella attributes the overall increase in clerical employment to substantial changes in the economy as a whole. She explains that both the supply and demand sides of the business market contributed to a dramatic “takeover” of clerical work by women (Rotella 169). That is, like Davies, she attributes the influx of women to the larger supply of them as educated workers and business's greater demand for someone to keep records. This kind of economic theorizing is common to histories of the office place, but it does not give us the complete picture; specifically, these economic explanations do not account for how men and women were socialized to see these new positions and technologies.

Technological Explanations of Office History

One attempt by historians to develop their history of the office place (insofar as the socialization of men and women is concerned) is to theorize about the introduction of new machinery into the office. Davies, Hartman Strom, and Rotella have each noted that the pattern of increase over time in women’s share of clerical employment corresponds closely to the timing of advances in clerical technology. Two decades, 1880-1890 and 1910-1920, witnessed the greatest changes in sex distribution of clerical employment (Rotella 169) and these decades also witnessed the introduction of office machinery such as the dictaphone, the teletype, the tabulator, computing devices, and the typewriter. Of these machines, the typewriter was arguably the most significant technological advance.

Davies contends the typewriter helped ease women into the office because the machine had not yet been “sex-typed” and therefore was not considered definitively masculine. After women became accomplished typists, though, conventional wisdom adjusted to declare that

since women could handle routine and monotony more than men, and their small hands suited the keyboard well, the typewriter was actually a “feminine” machine. Consequently, according to Davies, “One of the ways women entered clerical work was by mastering the typewriter and then finding a job as a typist” (53). In fact, an ad from *The Nation* advertising the benefits of the typewriter noted “mere girls are earning from \$10 to \$20 per week with the “Type-Writer.” According to Davies, though, it was the politics of the office, not any inherent traits of the typewriter that turned women’s work into routine. Because the typewriter had become feminized, mastery of the typewriter became a “light” clerical and a de-valued skill. Management did not see proficiency on this “feminine” machine as reason for promotion to higher levels.

Since the typewriter and women became common fixtures of office culture almost simultaneously, it is possible to see how the typewriter contributed to placing women in lower-paying, less prestigious positions as typists. By accounting for the introduction and later feminization of office machines, these histories detail some of the technological forces that placed women within the modern-day office structure.

But technological and economic forces are not the only social forces available by which to account for the maintenance of feminized roles and hierarchical structures. Other social forces can help account for the maintenance of these feminized roles and hierarchical structures. For instance, technological forces, like economic forces, do not contain within themselves the social force of the narratives people tell about the technological and economic forces. The narratives about the technological and economic forces involve the debate about

women's work and theories for Scientific Management, as well as handbooks for secretarial training, all of which defined and consequently limited women's roles in the office.

PART III. LIMITING WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT IN THE OFFICE

Factors like the debate over whether women should work in business at all, as well as the use of Scientific Management techniques to promote efficiency in the office, helped to maintain the feminized role of secretarial work and the consequent limitations of women's advancement in office hierarchies. Further, "[e]mployers sought to designate routine clerical work as 'light manufacturing,' to associate it with women's operative status in factories, and to suggest that while it was appropriate for most women it was not in any way similar to the skilled work of most men" (Strom 6).

The Debate: Should Women Work in the Office?

Even though many women populated the business world already, the debate about their place there still raged on. The office had been entirely the domain of men, and some people argued that women should not be admitted into employment in a man's world because they would not be able to overcome the handicaps in their nature—"the girl" was ruining the office because of her propensity for "giggling." Or, in an opposite direction, those women who did enter the office were accused of losing their feminine qualities and becoming "mannish"—ruining themselves by losing their "happy, careless, girlish little ways" (Burke 85). More concretely, there were government restrictions on hiring designed to make it harder for women to get jobs: "In 1932 Congress passed the Federal Economy Act, which, through explicit language, had the effect of excluding a married woman from working in civil service

if her husband did as well” (Women and the Depression). This is one of several tensions written into women’s position in the office. Although they were a fixture in the office, the societal infrastructure had not settled into accepting them.

One central reason for resistance was the feeling that women should be at home performing the work they were meant to: mothering and housekeeping . Some argued that office work would keep women from their appropriate roles as wives and mothers; in fact:

A 1932 American anti-nepotism law for government workers stated that only one spouse could work. While the law did not specifically state that the wife should be the one discharged, three out of every four who were dismissed under the law were female. (Garraty 116)

Laws like these resonated into the office place at the same time women were attempting to create workplace identities. There were certainly people who did not reject the idea of women working. According to Davies, there were those who felt that, “[O]ffice work actually made women better wives and mothers; it provided training in being systematic and well organized, which would be useful in future household management, and it offered an opportunity to experience first-hand the daily problem that their future husbands would face” (81). Tensions served to keep women in the limbo of lower status.

As Nature Intended

One item at stake in discussions about women’s nature was the place women could or should occupy in the office structure, and when Nature with a capital N is the guide those places are

pre-ordained in some sense. Nature is assumed to be a divine organizational tool at places in both the women's and the men's books. As Davies puts it, "[...] many of the assertions and conclusions of both sides served as ideological confirmation for the sexual stratification of the office labor force and for the concentration of women in lower-level work" (Davies 95). Both the women's and the men's etiquette books reflect a belief that office roles are dictated by God's master design of the world. The advice on appearance directed at men, for example, is given within an overall paradigm of progress, and that progress leads not just to a job, but a job that suited and reflected a man's true self in the universe. "[T]he supreme achievement of personality is to put one's self in conscious harmony with the will that governs the universe...this is happiness" (Davis 101-102) is what Howard Davis' *The Man in Business* tells its audience.

When training books of the time talked about boys being messengers, they characterized these boys as "future management material," but when women became messengers it was because they were more "amenable to discipline." Women's loftiest goal was described as a "minor promotion to typist or stenographer" (Davies 112). According to Davies, The ideological assumptions about the natural characteristics of males and females were made to mesh very neatly with the way in which clerical work was organized. Assumptions about women helped to justify not only a situation in which women were clustered in the lower levels of a work organization, but also the very fact that such positions, devoid of much chance of substantial promotion, exist at all. (96)

Debates surrounding this seemingly “natural” match between women’s characteristics and their eventual success were one of most powerful influences by which women were kept in lower secretarial positions and not promoted to positions of management. Although the prevailing assumption of the time was that these lower-status, monotonous clerical jobs existed and then women were found to fill them, I would argue, along with Davies, that this office structure was created around a prior negative image of women's abilities and overall worth.

Further, debates about whether women could or should enter the office place often presumed that women’s desire to work would be only temporary—until they found a man and started a family. It is important to understand that both women and their employers expected women to leave. As Hartman Strom says, “Because both women and their employers expected women to leave the workforce and eventually marry, it made no sense for their employers to train them for more responsible positions” (Strom 173). As Davies puts it, management thought “women whose hearts were set on future family life probably did not care that much about their work in the office” (94). If their only goal was to get married, why promote them? “Or so the argument went, and thus did it legitimate their segregation in the lower-paid, lower-status jobs” (Davies 94). This idea is vital in understanding not only how this ideological debate affected women's self-perception in the office, but also how the handbooks did. As one of the handbooks warns, “The typewriter and the notebook are cold comfort on a winter’s night and not very romantic on a warm June night . . . Don’t marry your job” (The Complete Secretary 43). If the handbooks (and culture at large) told women they wanted to get married, then women did not see any point in working to get ahead. In

turn, then, management's assumptions turned out to be true. This rather vicious psychological cycle served as a convenient self-fulfilling prophecy for management and went a long way in reifying women's position in the office. The handbooks served as part of the means by which this narrative was propagated.

Control and Surveillance: Scientific Management in the Office

Historians have also detailed the ways that the introduction of Scientific Management theories into the office place maintained the separation of men's and women's roles and devalued women's work. Hartman Strom contends Scientific Management theories gave the male office staff a feeling that their work was indeed rational, and provided them with an "ideological rationale for their dominance" (3). Scientific management, "[...] a body of ideas first publicized by Frederick Winslow Taylor and other engineers in the decade before World War I [...]" (2) championed "efficiency" over all. Its results— "[...] scientific planning, an end to sentimentality, and the objectification of workers and materials [...]"(3)—produced a dramatic change in office philosophy and management. The effort at making the office more efficient—so that as much work would be completed in as little time and for as low a cost as possible—led to changes that diverted control over the work process from clerical workers to managers.

Workers and managers rarely referred to it in those terms, but control of the work process was very much at issue. Such control had been central to the changes in the organization of clerical work from the time when, to a certain extent, it resembled a craft, to the time when it had been degraded to a series of routinized, repetitive tasks. The movement to apply the

principles of Scientific Management to the office can be seen as a crystallization of changes in the organization of clerical work (Davies 99).

As Scientific Management consultants were brought in to overhaul “inefficient” offices, they often focused on clerical work and went about counting the minutes and even seconds of a woman’s typing procedures. So women's transcription became only the action of their fingers, and nothing else. This left “precious little...to the clerical worker’s discretion” (117). Some companies, Davies notes, let girls keep their “pet” ideas to “foster their individuality” but only if the girls realized some of their pet ideas were “inefficient” or “unproductive” and dumped them.

Scientific management consultants also suggested marked office arrangements to further enhance productivity. Women's desks were kept back to back to prevent the sharing of gossip. Then, to further increase output, the “girls” were divided into various teams of typists to compete with one another. Further, the ideal office was arranged in such a way that the supervisor could monitor each woman but none of the women could see the supervisor. This ensured that the workers would not know at any given time if they were being observed, and would need to appear diligent at all times.

The effects of Scientific Management techniques were not just felt by woman workers, of course, since the application of the methods was office-wide. Howard Davis, author of the men’s etiquette book entitled *The Young Man in Business*, notes the “marked” change in business, and he contends that:

Industries radically new and different in their basic character have arisen; many of the old industries have been metamorphosed until they bear little resemblance to their handicraft predecessors; and machinery, division of labor, and scientific methods both in shop and office have produced an industrial system unlike anything known before. (v)

Although Davis appears careful not to actively criticize the current state of business, he spends considerable time in his handbook explaining to men that education simply does not mean what it used to, because employers now demand “common sense.” Because the world of industry is now “[...] as complex as it is efficient” he explains that what is needed to be a good employee are “tools” not unlike those acquired by manual laborers. (v) Davis is sad that men cannot take time in their education to discover their natural place in the business landscape. The executives in the new business world, “in its wisdom and economy [...] select men as closely fitted as possible for the work in hand and ... induct them as quickly as possible into the intricacies of the business” (vi).

Davis argues that while Scientific Methods made things more efficient, it has also made the rules harder to figure out. The old method involving “letting him fight his way against all obstacles” is now considered “wastefulness” (Davis vi) and now there are several different ways of approaching a problem based on the individual. A man must find the “single occupation for which he is by nature best fitted” (18) and that is harder to do in a business world obsessed with efficiency above all else. Davis spurns the notion that there are men who will be successful no matter where they are placed, thus perhaps bringing a more realistic

perspective to bear on male narratives that might otherwise emphasize the timeless qualities of, and inevitable success due to, male perseverance.

Scientific Management also drew women within its grasp. For instance, one notable element to Scientific Management theories was the increased specialization of labor: “The accounting and record-keeping revolution [brought on by Scientific Management] at the turn of the century demanded a new hierarchy of workers and a more specialized division of labor” (Strom 173). What this meant was that if clerical worker Clara was typing purchasing forms as well as separating the sheets from the carbon after she finished typing, this was declared “inefficient” by Scientific Management standards. Thus it was arranged that Clara would only type the form, and Kathleen would separate the form from the carbon sheets. So it went, then, person to person along a conveyor belt of clerical work, all in the name of efficiency and productivity.

This “specialization” had several results. For one thing, the separation between women's tasks and men's tasks increased all the more, despite the fact that Scientific Management affected all sectors of the office. Perhaps more importantly, it stripped clerical workers of control over the larger work product as a whole. Since they could not see how their particular task fit into the whole picture, they couldn't see the value of their role. “Because their activities were so restricted in scope, they did not have the opportunity to grasp other office activities or see how their particular task fit into the work flow” (Davies 128). This meant not only vertical promotion was difficult—women lacked a clear, overall perception of the office power structure—but even horizontal movement (from typist to calculator, for example) was

complicated. In addition, the limited scope of women's office tasks made women office workers all the more interchangeable to management. If one woman left to become a mother, another girl could be plugged in to work immediately. Theoretically, it required very little training to teach a new girl the decontextualized task she was assigned.

After economic forces got women into the office, technological inventions feminized their work and thus further cemented women into the office place (men could not type because that was women's work). But once admitted, it was the interaction of various other socio-cultural forces that relegated women to the lower rung of the power structure. Social debate about women's work abilities prohibited their promotion to higher positions, and eventually Scientific Management literally made these women interchangeable. These explanations provide insight into women's history in the office, but I believe that the socio-cultural dimension of the secretarial handbooks illustrates this history further. The secretarial handbooks published at the time, by creating and/or reinforcing the image of women as worried primarily about marriage and appearance, further justified the fact that women were rarely promoted beyond the clerical worker level.

IV. SECRETARIAL ETIQUETTE HANDBOOKS IN THE 1930s OFFICE

Marilyn Burke's *The Executive Secretary: Techniques For Success In a Secretarial Career* contains this as its ad copy: "The girl who takes 150 words of short-hand and types 80 words of perfect copy per minute still has a lot to learn before she qualifies as a top-notch executive secretary." Burke's introduction continues the narrative of women's role in the office as a more "social" than a "business" one: "I have come to realize that the skills essential to the

executive secretary are more apt to be taught in a personality development course than in a business course” (Burke 12). Burke goes on to explain that these essential skills are based on “principles of psychology and philosophy; on self-knowledge; on aptitude for her job; on understanding of other human beings; and on the realization of [the office girl’s] own aims, desires, scope, and limitations in relation to these other people and the business itself” (13). In other words, Burke believes her reasoning is based on the inherent nature of women.

Throughout these handbooks, “personality” traits such as good humor, common sense, a desire to serve, and agreeability were held up as the pinnacle of a good female worker’s disposition, as opposed to more “managerial” traits like the ability to gain respect, or the ability to establish and use authority well. Prior to 1930, business etiquette books rarely talked about women in the office place. Any etiquette concerning women was limited to “social etiquette”—wedding protocol, dinner party traditions, birthday party ideas, etc. However, in the mid-1930s, there was an explosion in business etiquette books written expressly for women entering the office. I should note that in her study, Davies separates “general office workers” from “private secretaries” (162). Although I understand her distinction, I will not honor it here, primarily because the handbooks do not make an effort to distinguish between those two types of jobs.

Secretarial handbooks published in the 1930s can be read as direct attempts to define women’s and men’s identities in the office and thus create a limited continuum for women in the office. The handbooks, though published outside the workplace and operating as a source external to the office, parallel the internal office pressure to conform. It is important to

realize the handbooks were helpful in many ways to women moving into the office. Since these were indeed new roles for women, and because of that, new roles for men, many of them might have relied on the handbooks for important advice on how they should present themselves and properly fill the roles they were given.

However, despite their usefulness, or perhaps because of it, these handbooks helped reify the office hierarchy where women clerical workers populated the bottom rung. They did this, in part, by helping to construct a coherent corporate culture and enculturating workers into it. Part of this enculturation was clarifying gender roles in the office. As discussed in Chapter Three: Methodology—Part 4, the etiquette books created ideal forms within their pages by defining five aspects of the gendered office worker: its vision, its physical appearance, its office technical skills, its business and social etiquette, and its morality and personhood. The following page contains Table 4.2, which organizes these large categories with their corresponding sub-categories or general subject content. These categories and their content are discussed in detail in the remaining pages of this chapter.

Table 4.2. Categories of Focus for Etiquette Books

	Women	Men
Vision -or- How to see yourself, your job, and you life.	job is a collection of tasks that need to be completed correctly and efficiently	each job is one step in a well-designed career
Physical Appearance -or- What to look like in the office.	clothing, hair, makeup, personal hygiene, and body shape	health of body, healthy eating, drinking water, avoiding constipation, clothing, hair, accessories
Office Technical Skills -or- What to do in the office.	phone protocol, typing efficiency, correct grammar usage, and proper pronunciation	stocks and bonds, accounting and actuarial skills
business and social etiquette -or- How to act in and out of the office.	deferential, polite, accepting/non-argumentative, friendly, open, anti-power and intimidation	decisive, rational, logical, confident but not arrogant
Morality and Personhood -or- How to create yourself in to a Great Man.	Not specifically addressed by women's etiquette books. There is implied content possibly in this category: "proper" moral behavior, family values, long- term goal of motherhood, fulfilling "natural" place in the universe	finding a higher power to guide life, considering the vast cosmos self-appraisal, planning for betterment, knowledge of general disciplines— psychology, anthropology, archaeology, physiology, psychology, religion, sociology, political science, drama, dance, botany, astronomy, literature practical vs. knowledge for growth

Vision: What You See Is What You Get

Although there are similarities in the categories of advice given to both men and women, the major divide in the philosophy of the advice is in the “vision” they assume. In the same way women’s position in the office was limited in its long-term vision, so was the advice given to them in these handbooks. The handbooks’ authors’ advice to women was about the everyday, and the goal was more about not getting fired and less about keys to developing a successful career. The women’s books cover the here and the now—dress, makeup, hygiene, phone etiquette, etc. There was no goal beyond avoiding sticking out like a sore thumb. Women were a relatively new fixture on the office landscape, so the limited focus of this advice makes sense. Their existence was problematic to many people, and tips on being as inconspicuous as possible had a captive audience.

The advice to men, however, was larger in scope. *In The Young Man in Business*, Howard Davis warns that “A man should avoid being a clock watcher. Some men arrive on the job at the exact starting hour and leave at the exact closing hour. That attitude may be all right for routine, hourly workers, who are not looking for much progress” (89). Even in this short excerpt there is a sense of a long-term goal and seeing a place further down the line. In these books, the female office worker is presented as a good woman to have around the office whose technical skills with the typewriter or stenography machine are a happy bonus. Narratives tell women not to look any further than the end of their desk. Successful men, however, should always be looking into their professional crystal globe, considering their job and life holistically.

There are sections on the everyday that detail stylish and appropriate dress for men, choosing the right hat for a particular head shape, and accentuating the positive in your body type, but this advice is always given in the context of the progression of man to businessman.

Choosing the right hat for your head is not simply about vanity or appearance, but about illustrating sound judgment to your peers and superiors.

Wearing horizontal stripes when you are short—which will make you look even shorter—might tell your superiors that you do not use what you have to the fullest extent. This advice is about manicuring your physical self to better fit the image of a winning professional.

More concrete but still representing a wider vision than the women's handbooks is advice to young men on becoming a leader in the office, becoming the kind of man your boss wants to

promote. Part of leadership is courage, and besides teaching readers that being blind is no excuse for being visionless,

Figure 4.1 tells us, “If you can continue the struggle against reverses and keep your flag of courage flying during the darkest days of your life,

nothing can rout you. The

advice to men was about work as some small part of a larger meaningful life. “Are you really a partner or merely an object of charity?” (Davis 24) is a question Davis urges his young men

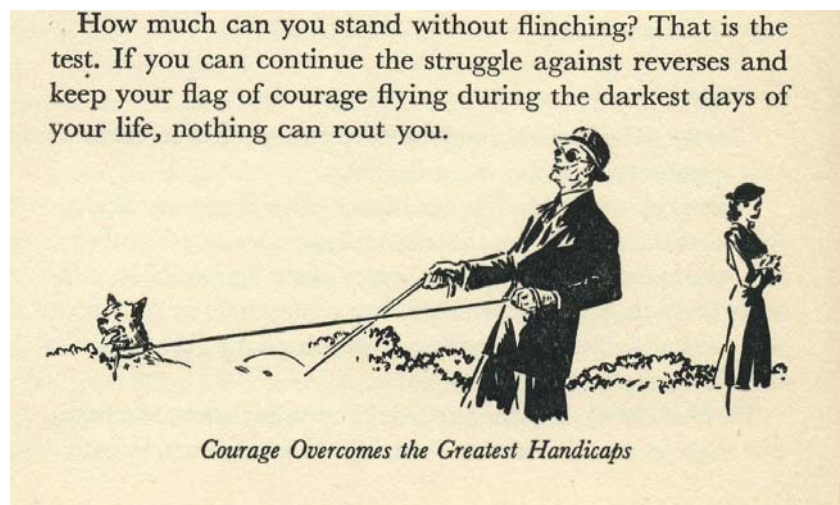


Figure 4.1. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

to ask. “Are you really just adding up sales numbers in a column or are you contributing to the company’s self-awareness?” (24) One small task can be considered by men to be one piece of a much larger, much more meaningful puzzle. Hunter suggests similar self-interrogation in her male etiquette handbook: “Are you a mere automaton, doing blindly the task set before you, or have you the vision to see it in relation to the business as a whole. Are you aware of the implications or possibilities of your work?” (23-24) For young male workers there is always more at stake when completing a task. A job consisting of such mundane tasks might not be attractive to young men, but Hunter reminds them that as long as they keep their eyes on the prize they could one day end up a powerful man:

If you make a list of the most successful leaders in business and industry, you will find that a large proportion of them began in apparently routine, “dead-end” jobs. John J. Raskob started out as a twenty-dollar-a-week stenographer and became one of the executives of the Du Pont Company. (25)

At other points in her book, Hunter offers the names of Henry Ford, David Sarnoff, Edward Bok, Charles Schwab, and Walter P. Chrysler as examples of great men who started small but had big dreams. “A man should not routinely do a routine job...if he’s going to advance he must do that other day’s work of preparation for wider opportunities and then evolve opportunities” (Hunter 24-25). Great businessmen have great vision to match. They are competent and skillful in their office jobs, but more importantly, they have the ability to see in all directions. This notion of the big picture allows young businessmen to envision themselves in a powerful position later in their professional life. Interestingly enough, none of the etiquette book authors discuss money when they discuss future prestigious careers for

young men. Instead, motivation comes from knowing you have done a good job, that you have been an asset to your company and represented your family well.

Much of the advice in the etiquette books for men seeks to enable men to shape themselves for the future when who they are and what they do will be one in the same. In one sense the paradigm of vision between men's and women's books could be explained simply as job vs. career. Women have jobs that help them financially and socially, and men develop a career that can define their character as a man. His career is a man's legacy, while a woman's legacy is her well-cared-for future family. The male etiquette experts argue that career choices are about the small things like dressing well, acting with honor, etc., but, in the end, they are about what kind of man one is, what kind of person a man intends to be, and how much and what kind of space a man takes up in the world.

There is no similar long-term vision suggested in the women's etiquette books, one reason being women's concerns in the office were too immediate. Considering their place in the universe was not their job—dressing appropriately and answering the phone with a polite tone was. The etiquette books tell a story of men with lives in sync with their careers.

The Young Man Who Could

Another aspect of a male office employee's vision is the notion that his career is a grand tale, replete with an important beginning where all the roots are planted. This tale of the successful businessman starts with the young man who dreams of his future career: "Finding out where a boy belongs in the world is often most difficult, for the criteria on which

judgment must be based are many and confusing” (Davis vi). One part of this confusion is the current state of the business world, discussed earlier in this chapter in the section on Scientific Management methods. Davis appears to feel that Scientific Management has contributed to a business world where education is not as valued as it should be. Changes have caused Davis to mourn the loss of

...old simple days when the growing boy could wander through the mill, shopyard, or machine shop and see for himself the elements of industry and form for himself some notion of his fitness and liking for the part he would play when older. (v)

According to Davis, these golden days allowed young men to take time with their education to find out who they were. A solid education allowed men to explore their talents and strengths. That way, when they finally embarked on a career they could begin by asking themselves a series of questions:

What are my favorite subjects? To what extent do others give me their confidence? To what extent do others seek my advice? To what extent did I buy and sell and trade with other boys? What have I built, if anything, with tools? To what positions, in and out of school, have I been chosen by my fellows? (Davis 10)

Honest answers to these questions can lead to young men finding the place meant for them in business. Orison Swett Marden, author of *The Young Man Entering Business*, tells a similar story of the birth of the great man. Marden offers an anecdote about Daniel Webster visiting the West and listening to farmers boast about their widespread land and bountiful crops. One of these farmers asks Webster:

“What do you raise on the hilly, rocky acres of your New England Farms?”

“MEN,” was the great lawyer’s reply. (Marden 11)

Etiquette books aimed at men generally possess a profound take on man’s destiny as it relates to the office place; the iconic image of the Great Man is present throughout these pages that create a long-term vision for businessmen. Considering women’s relative lack of history in business when compared to men’s history in business, it is not surprising that men would have developed a more elaborately articulated explanation of their role in the office. These etiquette books indicate that men were expected to enter the office with a sense of purpose. Assuming men had this sense of purpose, the expectations thrust upon them were very high. In a sense, it is as if they had a head start. This head start would allow men to conceive of their role in the office in grander terms than women could conceive of their role in the office.

Self-knowledge gave men this head start, according to Davis and Marden, in particular. To know oneself was to become a man capable of operating successfully in the world. Self-knowledge allows a young man to find his natural place. Davis quotes Plato, saying, “No two persons are born alike, but each differs from the other in natural endowments—one being suited to one thing and another to another”(17). It is the responsibility of a young man to find his natural place in the professional world.

Physical Appearance

Marilyn Burke’s first chapter, entitled “The Secretary and Her Personal Appearance” begins with a story about a New York executive who drew an analogy between a secretary and “a new tractor” (21). His point in the analogy is that a farmer might be attracted to a new tractor

because it has a fancy, shiny paint job, but he has to make sure he buys the tractor based on its performance in the field. Burke explains that although this is an “excellent analogy,” the New York executive surely didn’t mean that women in the office should ignore their appearance as an important part of their performance in the office. After all, “Everyone likes to look at an attractive woman . . . and the boss is probably no exception” (22). The picture shown in Figure 4.2 includes appearance, voice, manner, and interest in others in defining



Courtesy George La Monte and Son
A well-groomed appearance, modulated voice, courteous manner, and interest in others, all are part of a pleasing personality.

Figure 4.2. Hopkins, Mary Alden. *Profits from Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette*. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc. 1937.

certain way that makes the male’s day easier and more pleasant. Thus, there is a sense in which these handbooks write women's professional identities as primarily ornamental identities. The photo in Figure 4.2 does not show a woman answering a phone or typing. It shows her interacting with a male employee, perhaps hinting at the real advantage of maintaining a “pleasing” personality.

"personality." This definition, in turn, is a part of the "professionalism" required to be an effective secretary. In most of these handbooks, there is very little discernment between the "job" a secretary does—filing, typing, calculating—and what she looks like or acts like when she's doing her job.

The “job” appears to involve, therefore, filing as well as acting and looking a

Although there is nothing particularly surprising in the appearance advice in the books, it is interesting to note that in four of the five handbooks for women it is the very first topic addressed. Conversely, it is not the first topic addressed in any of the five men's handbooks I analyzed for this study. So while personal appearance is an issue for men, it is not their first priority. There are some women's handbooks where "personal hygiene" is covered prior to fashion advice. For example, "Be sure to wash under your arms carefully when you bathe!" (Hutchinson 45) directs one handbook for the successful secretary. Apparently little is left up to the discretion and personal taste of the individual woman—just as in the office place.

Commenting on hygiene and dress immediately establishes a set of priorities where appearance is indeed their first concern in the business world. I would argue that this set of priorities goes a long way in limiting women's aspirations for career success within the office structure. The books work to create the definition of what a "good" secretary is, and it has very little to do with technical expertise. Instead the reader learns things like, "Personal appearance is of great importance to a secretary, because she is judged on it both by her employer and by office callers" (Flynn 12). An ad of the time reminded women: "Every client is a potential date!"

In terms of clothing, the books suggest "conservative" dress. This means skirts in "bright but not flashy" colors. As one book suggests, "Who could object to a bright red suit, simply cut, or an attractive print dress?" (Wanous 67) The right clothes are continually described as helping the woman look "smart" but "attractive"—terms that Wanous apparently believes are normally mutually exclusive.

Even though fashions were more relaxed than ever before, the corset was still worn underneath dresses, seeking to make the female form homogenous as well. The clothes worked to minimize individuality even in female body shape. The clearest example of this attempt to create homogeneity is the notion of hiding personal faults. Flabby arms and an “overly robust pair of thighs” can make a girl’s figure stand out too much, Flynn’s book declares in one of the first sections: “The Most Important Part of Your Wardrobe: Your Girdle.” This is important because “there’s no point in spending a lot of money for a new suit or dress and having the whole effect ruined by bulges and bumps” (Burke 30). This book also advises readers to test themselves in a mirror before they “attempt” to wear a sleeveless dress: “Look at the part of your underarm where it joins the body. Is it firm? Is it round? Is it free from any discoloration? Is it too fat? Is it too thin?” (Burke 34). Only after this careful scrutiny can a girl dare to wear a sleeveless dress.

Concealing individuality is a persistent theme throughout the handbooks. In addition to conservative clothes, the “natural” look is encouraged consistently in makeup and hair. The goal of makeup, though, is not to enhance one’s facial feature or best feature, but to “conceal” personal faults: “Sufficient rest at night is an invaluable aid looking refreshed and alert the following day. If, on occasion, one does not get sufficient sleep, the fact should be concealed as well as possible” (Flynn 13). Here again the key theme is “conceal.” Throughout the handbooks, “hiding,” “covering,” and “concealing” any unacceptable feature is the mark of a dedicated secretary.

Advice for men on physical appearance definitely exists in the etiquette books. In the five I looked at, Hunter covers this topic in the most depth, but her book was the longest, too. The major difference is where these books start their advice on the body. Women's advice on physical appearance starts in the bath with personal hygiene. The books for men, however, start with describing the clothing necessary to be seen as a man worth knowing. None of the books I analyzed reminded men to shave or shower. Instead, they urged them to find clothes to flatter their natural body shape. Dressing, just like finding a career, is about accentuating your strengths (broad shoulders, long legs) and downplaying your weaknesses (wide torso, short stature).

The advice given to both genders on physical appearance is too massive to list completely, but Table 4.3 offers a glimpse of the advice Hunter gives to illustrate the range of topics covered. All of the excerpts from Table 4.3 are from Hunter's lengthy section entitled, "Dress and Grooming," because while all the women's books give advice on appearance and two of the men's books do, Hunter is the only handbook author who addresses both men and women in the same book. It should be noted that while Hunter offers over 60 pages of advice for women concerning their appearance and hygiene, she dedicates only two pages to women's clothing in "What the Business Woman Should Wear" (44). By comparison, men are only advised on their clothing, not their hygiene. This advice is under the heading "Clothing for Special Needs."

Table 4.3. Excerpts from Estelle B. Hunter’s “Dress and Grooming” unit.

ADVICE FOR WOMEN	ADVICE FOR MEN
Not only does color bring out the good or the bad points in the wearer’s face and figure, but it has a profound psychological effect. (24)	Every article of clothing you wear either improves your appearance or detracts from it. (77)
...Women of good taste instantly recognize the suitability of certain materials for certain purposes, as, for example, tweeds and stout cottons and linens for country wear; and chiffons, rich silks, and lames for evening. (31)	How to buy a good suit What overcoat to wear. How to recognize a quality material, quality, color, pattern, cut, fit (78)
Your scent should be a part of your personality. (57)	Sports vests may be worn in the country, for traveling, or for motoring. (85)
Mascara and eye shadow should be omitted during business hours. (67)	Custom has decreed that one all-purpose hat is not longer sufficient for the well-dressed man. Today the hat must be appropriate for the occasion and the rest of the costume.
Older women should remember that shingled hair is unkind to them and adds about ten years to their real age. (58)	Whatever type of tie you select, be sure it is interesting and not full and characterless, but avoid loud colors at all times. (97)
Your hands can be both useful and beautiful if you care for them properly (67).	Many a man has ruined the appearance of his white trousers by wearing colored or striped shorts? Or shirt? with them. (99)
The pleasing appearance of a wife and mother at the breakfast table can contribute a great deal to starting the entire family off with a feeling of well-being, and will in turn react on her own spirits so that she will start the day with zest and enthusiasm. (69)	No man should be guilty of wearing conspicuous jewelry, for this is an indication of extremely bad taste. (101)
[for the business woman] Do not wearing frilly, fluffy dresses, dangly earrings, high heels, and elaborate hair dresses. (69)	Walking sticks are gaining in favor, but are never carried with semiformal or formal eveningwear. (102)

Besides being in a larger context of success, the advice on physical appearance directed toward men is also more concrete. This can probably be attributed to the fact that men's business clothing options are more limited than women's. The suit is the centerpiece of the male business wardrobe, and in the 1930s the possible variations were limited to the subtle nuances between shades of gray.

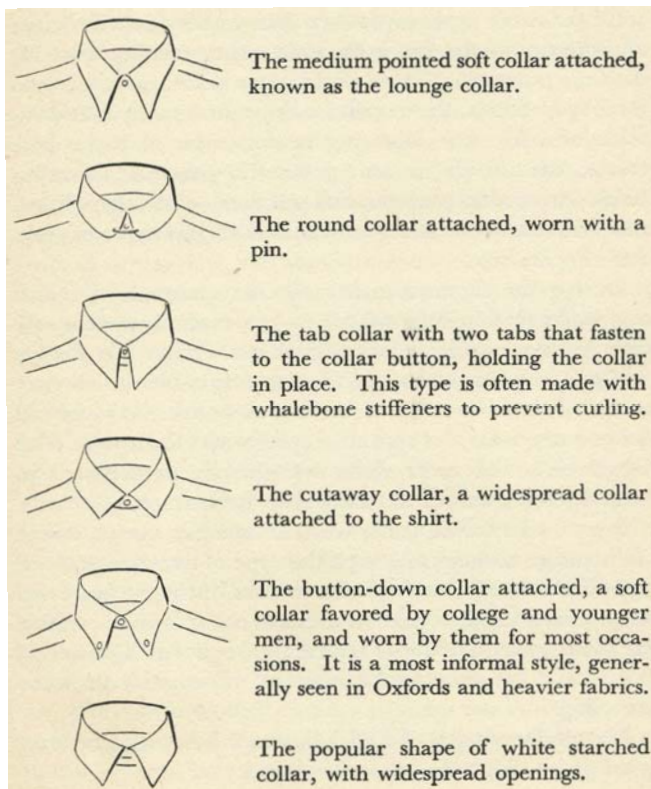


Figure 4.3. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

Figure 4.3, for example, shows male readers the differences between various shirt collars and how they should be worn. Specialized advice like this would appeal to men who were already in the business world, but were just beginning to be able to afford clothing designed for specialized social engagements.

Hunter's unit on appearance also spends a considerable amount of time on physical exercise as it relates to a good appearance. It even gives diagrams for

stretching to improve posture. Stretching exercises may appear at first to be a simple addition to the spectrum of etiquette categories, but they are another example of the smallest topic being explained in terms of a larger, more meaningful goal for men. Hunter urges men to take care of their overall health because it improves mental sharpness, and it will also help develop the endurance necessary for the long hours a powerful job requires. In some sense,

this makes the advice about appearance for men about something deeper than surface appearance. This same whole body approach is not a part of advice to women.

Office Technical Skills

When the books for women talk about technical skills, they cover very basic activities such as spelling and how to hold the handset of the phone properly (Figure 4.4 shows the proper form). The handbooks do not give suggestions on how to change jobs, or even suggest it was possible. Instead, the technical skill sections present very limited goals for secretaries: spell things right, do not speak too loudly into the phone, and be careful about relying on “personal” habits of pronunciation in the office.

Even the positioning of women on the office machinery itself (see Figure 4.5) is imbued with a moral dimension or value. Not sitting at the typewriter correctly could result in bad posture and fatigue, but more urgently, it might result a secretary not doing the kind of work her boss deserves.



Figure 4.4. Hutchinson, Lois Irene. *Standard Handbook for Secretaries*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing. 1936.

One of the pronunciation sections warns: “Words often mispronounced.” The chapter proceeds to highlight the correct way to pronounce these words:

Casualty—cazh'ualty not cazh-u-al'ity
 Champion—cham'pion, not cham-peen'
 Avenue—av'en-yu, not av-en-oo
 Data—day'ta or dah'ta, not dat'a
 Impious—imp'ious, not im-pi'ous
 (Flynn 45)



Figure 4.5. Faunce, F.A. and F.G. Nichols.
Secretarial Efficiency. New York: McGraw-Hill
 Book Company. 1939.

None of the sections that prescribe “proper” pronunciation address the issue of regional dialects. By declaring certain pronunciations as “correct” and others as “incorrect,” the handbooks create homogeneous values for speaking, as well as dressing, acting, etc. Not

only should secretaries conceal their individual personality traits and their body differences, but

they should conceal any “personal” pronunciation habits or errors by polishing their skills and learning to speak a standardized language. This standardization of skills, dress, and behavior works to make women completely interchangeable. This standardization, whether unspoken or spoken, operates within offices to create a homogeneous clerical identity — one that results in optimal efficiency and production.

Finally, Figure 4.6 illustrates one of the topics covered under "Technical Skills" in several of the textbooks. "Decorating the Office" is represented as one of the vital tasks of any good secretary. The particular arrangement shown in Figure 4.6 is called a "Radiating Arrangement." This is one of several different arrangements (Triangular Arrangement, Circular Arrangement, Vertical Arrangement, and Rhythmic Arrangement are others)

secretaries can use to reflect the personality of her office. Including flower arranging as a part of "technical skills" is another way the scope of women's talents in the office is limited.

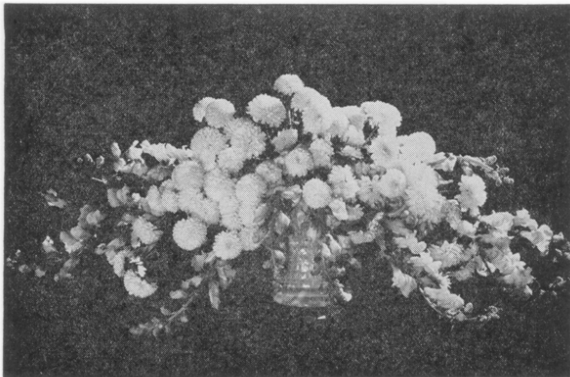


Figure 114. Radiating Arrangement.

Figure 4.6. Hopkins, Mary Alden. *Profits from*
Courtesy: Handbook in Business Etiquette. New
 York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc. 1937.

Parallel advice for men on technical skills is difficult to find. For the most part, these books assume men possess basic technical skills.

Once again, this can probably be attributed to the fact that women did not have many success stories from their short time in the office place.

This caused etiquette book authors to assume women needed the most basic of skills explained to them. None of the authors for men address pronunciation, posture, or decorating

an office. They do address skills, but they do so in the context of "business skills" as opposed to various task skills that might be done day to day in the office. Figure 4.7 is a typical example of one kind of information given to men. I have provided a visual of this page to demonstrate the formatting is not reader-friendly. The information is listed without any explanation. The author assumes the male reader will understand the numbers, and if the reader does not understand them they have been given fair warning that they should be familiar with this type of information. In this particular case it concerns charts and figures on "Computing Compound Interest" and "Determining the Maturity of Negotiable Paper."

The skill advice given is broader in scope, involving men’s self-education about the business world as a whole, as well as the world economy. For example, there are section titles such as “Know What you Have to Sell,” “Know the Market,” “Conviction, Desire, Action” and “You

Must Sell Yourself” in Hunter’s book, sections on understanding the organizational pyramid of your company, supervision, and leadership in Davis. Stevens’ *The Correct Thing* contains advice on good letter writing and toast giving, while Marden offers sections on “Self-confidence,” “Wasting our Energy Capital, and Misers of

BUSINESS MAN'S BRAIN PARTNERS.										
INTEREST TABLE AT SIX PER CENT.										
Time \$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$10	Time
1 da.	0.00017	0.00034	0.00051	0.00068	0.00085	0.00102	0.00119	0.00136	0.00153	1 da.
2 da.	0.00034	0.00068	0.00102	0.00136	0.00170	0.00204	0.00238	0.00272	0.00306	2 da.
3 da.	0.00051	0.00102	0.00153	0.00204	0.00255	0.00306	0.00357	0.00408	0.00459	3 da.
4 da.	0.00068	0.00136	0.00204	0.00272	0.00340	0.00408	0.00476	0.00544	0.00612	4 da.
5 da.	0.00085	0.00170	0.00255	0.00340	0.00425	0.00510	0.00595	0.00680	0.00765	5 da.
6 da.	0.00102	0.00204	0.00306	0.00408	0.00510	0.00612	0.00714	0.00816	0.00918	6 da.
7 da.	0.00119	0.00238	0.00357	0.00476	0.00595	0.00714	0.00833	0.00952	0.01071	7 da.
8 da.	0.00136	0.00272	0.00408	0.00544	0.00680	0.00816	0.00952	0.01088	0.01224	8 da.
9 da.	0.00153	0.00306	0.00459	0.00612	0.00765	0.00918	0.01071	0.01224	0.01377	9 da.
10 da.	0.00170	0.00340	0.00510	0.00680	0.00850	0.01020	0.01190	0.01360	0.01530	10 da.
11 da.	0.00187	0.00374	0.00561	0.00748	0.00935	0.01122	0.01309	0.01496	0.01683	11 da.
12 da.	0.00204	0.00408	0.00612	0.00816	0.01020	0.01224	0.01428	0.01632	0.01836	12 da.
13 da.	0.00221	0.00442	0.00663	0.00884	0.01105	0.01326	0.01547	0.01768	0.01989	13 da.
14 da.	0.00238	0.00476	0.00714	0.00952	0.01190	0.01428	0.01666	0.01904	0.02142	14 da.
15 da.	0.00255	0.00510	0.00765	0.01020	0.01275	0.01530	0.01785	0.02040	0.02295	15 da.
16 da.	0.00272	0.00544	0.00816	0.01088	0.01360	0.01632	0.01904	0.02176	0.02448	16 da.
17 da.	0.00289	0.00578	0.00867	0.01156	0.01445	0.01734	0.02023	0.02312	0.02601	17 da.
18 da.	0.00306	0.00612	0.00918	0.01224	0.01530	0.01836	0.02142	0.02448	0.02754	18 da.
19 da.	0.00323	0.00646	0.00969	0.01292	0.01615	0.01938	0.02261	0.02584	0.02907	19 da.
20 da.	0.00340	0.00680	0.01020	0.01360	0.01700	0.02040	0.02380	0.02720	0.03060	20 da.

BUSINESS TABLES.										
Year	2%	2½%	3%	3½%	4%	4½%	5%	Year		
1	1.02000	1.02500	1.03000	1.03500	1.04000	1.04500	1.05000	1		
2	1.04040	1.05063	1.06086	1.07109	1.08132	1.09155	1.10178	2		
3	1.06121	1.07289	1.08457	1.09625	1.10793	1.11961	1.13129	3		
4	1.08243	1.10561	1.12979	1.15397	1.17815	1.20233	1.22651	4		
5	1.10409	1.13941	1.17473	1.21005	1.24537	1.28069	1.31601	5		
6	1.12619	1.17369	1.22119	1.26869	1.31619	1.36369	1.41119	6		
7	1.14869	1.19869	1.24869	1.29869	1.34869	1.39869	1.44869	7		
8	1.17169	1.22469	1.27769	1.33069	1.38369	1.43669	1.48969	8		
9	1.19509	1.25069	1.30569	1.36069	1.41569	1.47069	1.52569	9		
10	1.21889	1.27669	1.33469	1.39269	1.45069	1.50869	1.56669	10		
11	1.24309	1.30269	1.36269	1.42269	1.48269	1.54269	1.60269	11		
12	1.26769	1.32869	1.38969	1.45069	1.51169	1.57269	1.63369	12		
13	1.29269	1.35469	1.41669	1.47869	1.54069	1.60269	1.66469	13		
14	1.31809	1.38169	1.44569	1.50969	1.57369	1.63769	1.70169	14		
15	1.34389	1.40869	1.47369	1.53869	1.60369	1.66869	1.73369	15		
16	1.37009	1.43669	1.50369	1.57069	1.63769	1.70469	1.77169	16		
17	1.39669	1.46469	1.53269	1.60069	1.66869	1.73669	1.80469	17		
18	1.42369	1.49269	1.56169	1.63069	1.69969	1.76869	1.83769	18		
19	1.45109	1.52169	1.59269	1.66369	1.73469	1.80569	1.87669	19		
20	1.47889	1.55069	1.62269	1.69469	1.76669	1.83869	1.91069	20		

DETERMINING THE MATURITY OF NEGOTIABLE PAPER.

The table below is used in finding the maturity of notes and drafts. The first and third columns indicate the number of the month; the second column the month and the number of days more (minus sign) or less (plus sign) than thirty therein. Take a note payable six months from September 10th. September is the ninth month (Column I). Nine plus six equals fifteen. The fifteenth month is March (Column II); so the note is due March 10th. If the note had been payable one hundred and eighty days from date, it would have been due March 9th. Three days, one for October, December and January, are subtracted from the two added for February (Column II).

Maturity Table.					
1	January—1	.....13	7	July—1	.....19
2	February—2	.....14	8	August—1	.....20
3	March—1	.....15	9	September—1	.....21
4	April—1	.....16	10	October—1	.....22
5	May—1	.....17	11	November—1	.....23
6	June—1	.....18	12	December—1	.....24

COMPUTING COMPOUND INTEREST.

Interest that is computed on the sum of the original capital and unpaid interest (usually periodically added to the principal) is called compound interest. To find the compound interest for a given period on a certain amount multiply the number of dollars in this amount by the amount (see table below) found in the per cent column directly opposite the number of years specified and subtract the original capital. Take one-half the rate for twice the time if the interest is to be compounded semiannually, and one-fourth the rate for four times the time, if quarterly. The table is not limited to use for periods under twenty years. For the amount of \$1 for twenty-five years multiply the amount of \$1 for twenty years by the amount of \$1 for five years; for forty years multiply the amount of \$1 for twenty years by itself.

Figure 4.7. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

Time.” Marden’s sections are about developing skills that make one appear to be a leader, not skills that one might actually complete sitting at a desk.

Social Etiquette and Business Etiquette

This category contains the most general kind of etiquette imperatives in similar ways to both male and female employees. There are slight variations, but the most basic advice concerns both sexes. Using silverware properly and sending thank you notes are points of advice generally recognized by many people in society as so-called proper and civilized behavior. And in some ways, the advice in this category can be as basic as advice that might be given



to a young child. Directives like “Keep your elbows off the table,” “Don’t talk with your mouth full,” and “Never reach over a fellow diner to retrieve something across the table” (Hunter 56) are solidified in popular culture as “classic” rules of etiquette. Because the etiquette books address both sexes for the most basic etiquette advice, I have lumped business and social etiquette together.

Social Etiquette

Although the office is an environment that requires dedication and focus on work tasks, it is not devoid of social opportunities. These social engagements must be effectively negotiated if a woman wishes to stay employed. Chapter 10 of MacGibbon’s *Manners in Business* is entitled “The Party Side of Business” and poses these questions as part of its lesson:

The innumerable semi-social situations which grow out of office contacts make knowledge of office etiquette necessary to the modern business girl. Should she smoke during business hours? What about a little drink after five o’clock, if offered by a higher-up and if the firm isn’t too fussy? Should invitations to lunch and dinner be spurned or accepted? (MacGibbon 121)

This paragraph illustrates the beginning and end of the spectrum of advice offered to the office girls concerning professional opportunities. Women’s concerns are relegated to the realm of smoking etiquette and lunch invitations. The handbooks do not offer this advice as a corollary to other aspects of office success, like how to advance to management positions. The handbooks begin with proper hygiene and end with pronouncing the word “champion” correctly. This spectrum does not contain much room for techniques on how to get promoted.

A successful secretary is one who keeps the office machinery running smoothly, with no friction or “grinding of gears,” particularly in her personal relations with her employer, office associates and callers. As the books recommend, “Accept all suggestions graciously and give them a fair trial” (Allen 5). Just as appearance is standardized, so are professional values in a way that created a homogeneous culture among women in the office and devalued women’s work.

Hunter, for one, makes it clear to her readers that etiquette should be viewed not as a “nuisance” but as something that “makes us human” (46). For both men and women etiquette is about avoiding animal-like, base behavior while engaging in social situations. Much of the advice might be read as quite obvious to a contemporary reader (When you smoke at the table, do not leave ash in the sugar bowl or cream bowl) but it is important to keep in mind that, as has been documented in this dissertation, this was a singular moment in history. Single, working men and women spent regular social time together in restaurants, movies, and bars for the first time in American history. Men courted women long before the 1930s, of course, but in this instance males and females interacted socially without necessarily “courting.” That a single woman might meet a single man at a bar after work was still blasphemous to some in the 1930s. The Roaring Twenties had just passed, and while that era of debauchery and bobbed haircuts surely loosened some moral strings, the shifts in attitude were not nationwide by any means. For one thing, Middle America considered flappers and their ilk spoiled upper class n’er-do-wells, and there was backlash in the form of strong judgment on women who appeared to be too free.

Other pieces of social advice involved how the newly-mingling single men and women of the 1930s interacted with each other's body. For instance, for a man to walk on the sidewalk correctly with a woman means maintaining good posture, walking next to her, and not throwing one's arm around her neck like a teenager. In fact, the only time you should put your arm around a woman is when you are married to her, to assist her across the street or over a puddle, or to help her into a taxicab. (Burke 54)

Interestingly enough, Hunter offers men etiquette rules applicable to a workplace analogous to that of the office: the home that has been made by the woman. For instance, in her section of social etiquette, Hunter explains to men what RSVP means and how to do it, urging young men to go to any reputable party they are invited because you never know when someone influential could be in attendance. Presumably, RSVP's are traditionally a woman's job in the course of managing the household. Other aspects of "home" etiquette are addressed by Hunter, particularly where she explains, at length, about men watching what they eat when they get home at night. Hunter warns that you cannot just go home and eat whatever you want out of the refrigerator, because you could end up eating tomorrow's breakfast. Perhaps your wife has prepared a coffee cake for breakfast. It would be quite rude for you to eat it and leave her scrambling in the morning. Instead, ask your wife to prepare a hot plate, and when you arrive home you may ask her to reheat it. Although this might seem like more work for her at the time, it is preferable to ruining her morning schedule. Hunter also advises that modeling proper behavior at home will pay off in terms of your children's future (Hunter 99). Therefore, much as it is assumed that women need to learn the rules of the office, so are men assumed to need to learn the rules of the home. Much like the woman who, *tabula rasa*,

walks into the office, the man written by these rules is a man seemingly oblivious to the arcane mysteries of home management.

Business Etiquette

The business etiquette rules appear designed to familiarize readers with the primary rules of working in an office. As opposed to advice on “Morality and personhood” that prompts readers to consider long-term effects of current actions, the advice in the business etiquette category is about the daily interactions and tasks in an office setting. Stevens reminds readers several times, “Don’t be late,” explaining that, akin to the early bird getting the worm, people who are late might miss being assigned time-sensitive tasks at the beginning of a busy day in the office. This motivation for being on time is offered in addition to warnings that late people are perceived as lazy people. Men without focus and drive do not bother to be on time, because they do not understand the importance of one minute in the business world. (Stevens 98)

Additional advice includes a reminder to avoid wasting office supplies, which will tell your boss you use your resources well and you understand the value of a dollar. This might make him more likely to view you as a future leader, as he might see a bit of himself in you (a possibility all the more likely if the boss and employee both happen to be male, presumably) (Hunter 74). Other directives involve keeping non-work conversations to a minimum, avoiding personal interaction during work hours, and not taking more time than allotted for lunch. (75).

There are several points of advice about how to hold one's body in a professional setting. For example, Davis gives a diagram illustrating proper posture standing as well as sitting. He explains how to sit down with grace as opposed to throwing oneself in a chair as if at a sporting event. Slouching against a desk or a doorframe or a water cooler is also unprofessional and might reveal to people your lack of pride in your office role. (Davis 88) When one bends over one must also be careful not to stick one's rear up in the air, which is just plain impolite. Instead, one must first crouch down on their knees and then pick up the item. Social etiquette towards women extends to the office in that men should always open doors for ladies, and pick up any items a lady may have dropped. (Stevens 32) Women are seen as women first and office workers second. They are not transformed by their surroundings or considered with any more esteem because they hold a job in the business world.

Interviews

Each of the books dedicates a section to interview etiquette, and for the most part they appear to side with the interviewer or management figure. There is never any point where the etiquette authors critique the skills or etiquette of the mythical management figures in their books. For example, Stevens explains that if an interviewer seems to ask questions only about statistics or your resume it means he has not been able to get a clear sense of you. (Stevens 77) In that case, it falls on the applicant to work harder on presenting himself to his interviewer. "Success is dependent on character" (Hunter 47) and because of that you must present a picture of yourself as honorable, intelligent, and ambitious. At the same time, you must not appear so ambitious that you will not work well with your colleagues. "Team play

of the mind and the will” (Stevens 79) is an important part of any man’s office’s success and you must relay that to an interviewer in the short time you have.

Some books do cover larger issues in terms of basic business etiquette, putting the advice in the context of moving up in the office. Readers can learn how to introduce an idea to the boss (present it as an offshoot of one of his ideas), and how to prepare for responsibility (set daily goals before you begin each work day, even if that means getting up early or working at home the night before). (Davis 23) Much of this advice assumes that the reader has advancement on his mind. In a section on how to advance to become a supervisor, Howard Davis explains that showing leadership qualities, a fair mind, and avoiding conflicts are the most important things to show a boss who has the power to advance your career. (Davis 88) He further implores men to always “Know where you stand in the company, how well you are doing, where you can advance, how much more you can get paid” (88). They stress that an understanding of your place in the overall scheme is vital to moving somewhere else within that scheme, although it is important to find the perfect pace at which to advance. Too fast makes you appear overly ambitious and possibly disloyal, and too slow makes you appear unwilling to take initiative in our career.

Etiquette and Emotions in the Office

A vice president of a bank once told a young woman applicant that he would never hire a woman because if you do not show her special attention she sulks; because “if you do [show her special attention], the men employees are resentful. When you criticize her work she either gives an excuse or cries; she takes unfair advantage of her sex. I wouldn’t have a

woman employee around” (Hunter 76). This story is even backed up by a poem Hunter claims was popular at the time:

And how tears heighten women’s powers
 My typist weeps for hours and hours
 I took her for her weeping powers
 They so delight my business hours (73)

According to this poem, emotions are portrayed as something negative for women. The only negative emotion for men ever mentioned is “jealousy” of other men, and male readers are urged to view their colleagues not as competition but as part of their own success. Characterizing emotions as a detriment for

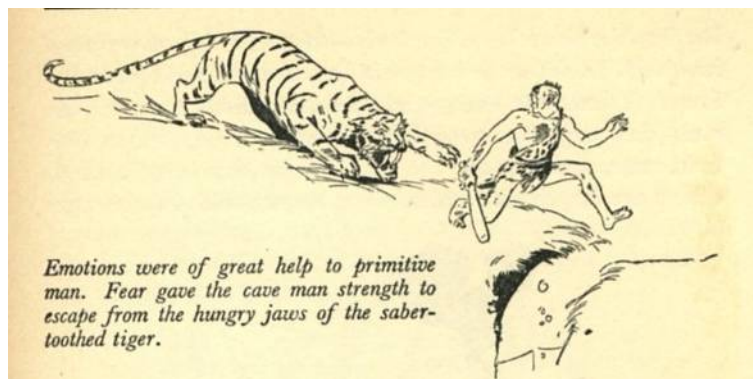


Figure 4.8. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

women is helped by the fact that “emotions” appear to be synonymous with entirely negative emotions like sadness, anger, jealousy, humiliation and bitterness. In contrast, Figure 4.8 tells a story of emotion and men where emotion can be seen in a positive light. For men, at least according to our cavewoman running from a tiger, emotion can be a force of power as a businessman. The caption under the picture of the cavewoman reads, “Emotions were of great help to primitive man. Fear gave the cavewoman strength to escape from the hungry jaws of the sabertooth tiger.” Hunter explains that while fear must be controlled it can be an important motivating factor in the office landscape. It seems as though women’s emotional reaction (crying, whining, throwing a fit) are attributed to negative emotions—anger, jealousy, etc. But they are never attributed to fear. What if a woman cries at her desk because she is afraid

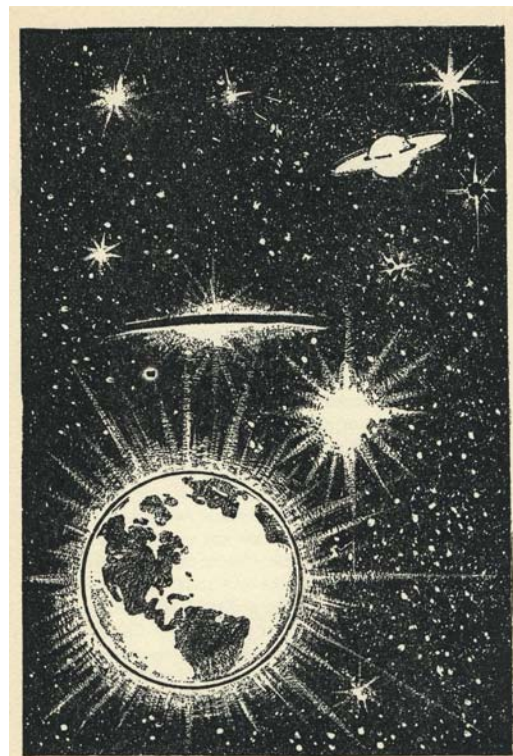
she is not doing well or she is intimidated by other more experienced employees? If this were the case it appears that would be okay. She is experiencing fear and we need fear. However, in this context it is termed jealousy, or worse, “using her sex.”

Other business etiquette advice for women contributes to the limited continuum of expectations for women in the office. Women are continually encouraged to be polite, affable, and pleasing—all terms that suggest passivity in an office setting. Women are, in fact, warned against becoming too “businesslike” and therefore “mannish.” After all, the books warn, women who become too much like men will not be marrying material in a few years. In just these few suggestions one can see the narratives imposed on women about most every decision in their lives.

Morality and Personhood

While throughout this chapter I have been able to compare content in the women’s etiquette

books with the content in the men’s etiquette books for each category, in this category I am not able to do so. The women’s etiquette books simply do not specifically address what I am calling “Morality and Personhood,” “God,” and “Knowledge.” These subjects are not in the realm of possibility for a women office worker—at least according to the authority possessed



Man's Conception of the Universe Has a Profound Effect upon His Life

Figure 4.9. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

by the etiquette handbooks. Because of this, the last six pages of this chapter focus solely on the content of the men's etiquette books as they address Morality and Personhood.

Figure 4.9 shows the cosmos with a caption that reads, "Man's Conception of the Universe Has a Profound Effect upon His Life." An artistic rendition of the solar system is not an

image that immediately correlates with business etiquette,

but in the story of the male gender, finding one's spot in the vast space is very much a part of business success. "Morality and Personhood" as a category title would not exist without

the men's etiquette books. The women's etiquette books

address morality in small doses, but there is really no

corresponding content to the way men's books talk about

morality and personhood. Not all of the men's etiquette

books address values and morality in the way I will discuss it

below. It is primarily Hunter and Marden who educate men

on the subject. Despite that, this section is worth including

with the other categories of etiquette because it illustrates so clearly the competing paradigms of gender found in men's etiquette books and women's etiquette books.

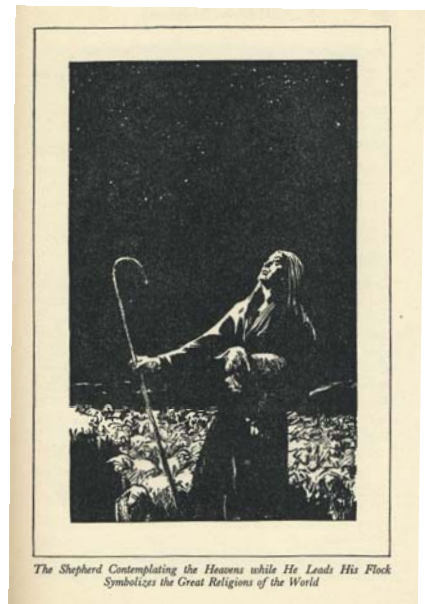


Figure 4.10. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

The language employed in this section is so abstract and grand that it seems incongruent with the business world. It reflects a time at the beginning of the contemporary office structure where people expected to work for the same company for their professional careers. And because relatively few people had the opportunity to go to college, the prospect of having a

job as a well-paid businessman was quite a privilege. This might explain, in part, the desire to turn a job into an exploration of one's place in the cosmos or one's theories of the afterlife into motivation for seeking promotion. The Morality and Personhood section is divided into two subcategories: God and Knowledge.

God

I chose to call this section “God” rather than “Religion” because these sections of etiquette do not urge a connection with any religion but Christianity. The authors pretend to, at one point professing to be okay with agnosticism but later citing studies that “prove Christians are happier” (Hunter 88). Figure 4.10, an image of one of the Three Wise Men, is said to represent “The Great Religions of the World.”



Figure 4.11. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

The topics God and Religion might also fit under the previously discussed “Vision” heading; they certainly concern themselves with long-term issues (i.e. the longest term, in fact—eternity). Because of this section's references to God, spiritual beliefs, death, and other rather cosmic concerns, though, I have given it its own section. Hunter, for one, calls these “The Principles of Life to Live By.” Overall, she takes readers far away from the actual office place, arguing that men must have “some code of living” if they are to be truly successful. After all,

“[...]man is not an accident or an incident or a molecule of star dust, but the final terms in the mighty creative process made in the image of God himself” (44). She continues by asserting that:

The universe is not a blind machine but a place of purpose and beauty, man’s home, in which are all the elements for his happiness [and further, man has] [...] within his self-conscious mind the capabilities to understand his world, appreciate its beauty and participate with its Creator in its further development. (Hunter 44)

All under the heading of “etiquette,” Hunter rather skillfully moves from posture to meeting with God about a possible promotion. The narrative of the man is charged with great importance and weight. Males have a purpose on the Earth, and if they meditate enough on the subject they will find that prescribed place.

Orison Swett Marden says Godliness is next to self-confidence: “To be self-approved, -to win the yea and amen of one’s inner self, -this is a success, indeed” (28). Once again, closeness with God manifests itself in business hierarchy maneuvering. These guiding fusions: knowledge and god, bible and poetry, being good at your job and being good at your life, provide insight into what’s at stake in a gender narrative. To be a Man is to be a significant force in the universe. To be less than that is to be passed by without a look, to conceal oneself to avoid trouble.

In a telling fusion, Hunter quotes “To thine own self be true” alongside “Do unto others” as principles to live by. She puts these quotes together in the book as if they from the same

source, when in fact the first is from Hamlet and the second is from the Bible. While I am not arguing she mistakenly believes these two quotes are from the same source, or that she even means to present them as such, her fusion Shakespeare and The Bible shows that in living by certain principles, there is little or no separation between success and Godliness. Because Shakespeare is a poet who makes Hunter's Top 100 poets, he is part of the formula that makes up the knowledgeable man.

There are points where the "morality and personhood" section overlaps with the Business Etiquette section, a testament to the fact that for these etiquette experts there is little separation between being a good businessman and being a good human being. Not only is God a part of the quest for a meaningful life, God is also dictating your actual job description. "Men, like ships, must look to something higher if they are to steer a clear course through life" (99) and this goes for the office place as well as home, church, and in the individual soul of the man.

Knowledge

In the world of some of the 1930s male etiquette books it is knowledge, not "cleanliness," that is next to Godliness. To read and understand the best artists of all time is to be that much closer to God. In the following excerpt from "Your life, your background," Esther Hunter explains what a man needs to be concerned with:

As life becomes more and more complicated, as every branch of science advances with bewildering rapidity, as new political, economic, and educational ideas become current, as new movements develop in the arts and

new books come from the presses in a steady stream, it becomes increasingly difficult to be well informed. (44)

Knowledge is portrayed in this section much differently than anything else discussed in the office skills or business etiquette sections. At one end knowledge is about a classic humanities education: reading the Great Books, having a well-round intellectual background, understanding other cultures and religions, and possessing a keen sense of history. One possibility for stressing the importance of this kind of well-rounded man might be what Davis referenced in his section on the Great Man. Education, according to Davis, used to be

about a young man taking his time, exploring his interests, and finding himself. The shifts in the business world, possibly prompted somewhat by Scientific Management techniques, have made “tools” more important than “knowledge.” Or, as Hunter puts it, “Esteem for the well-educated

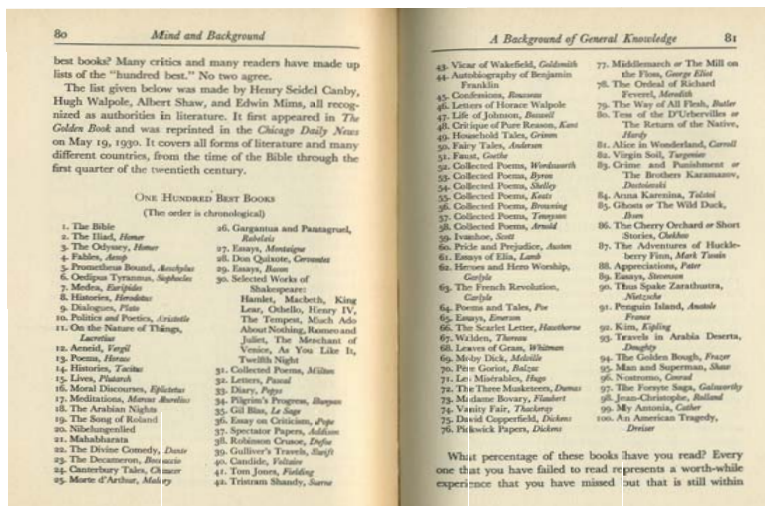


Figure 4.12. Hunter, Estelle B. *Personality Development: A Practical Self-Teaching Course Comprising...* Chicago: The Better-Speech Institute of America, 1939.

person is increasing, but at the same time, the world is changing its views as to what constitutes a well-educated person” (Hunter 10). Deciding that one cannot plan on being well-educated in this day and age of industrialism one has to take action and educate themselves.

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 represent part of this philosophy. In the first one, a man is standing in what appears to be his personal library searching through his collection of great books. The caption reads, “Books, like friends, should be chosen with discrimination.” In this instance the author takes this moment to extend the meaning of good books. A good book is not simply chosen at random, and not all people are able to choose good books. Discrimination is a tool of knowledge and it marks a man with distinction. Leave the mediocre life to the indiscriminate. Figure 4.12 is an excerpt from the book that provides a handy canon of vast knowledge in the form of Top 100 list.

Conclusion: Genre and Gender Narratives in Etiquette Handbooks

These etiquette books tell elaborate, detailed stories that define men and women in terms of gendered behavior and values. Vision is one significant different between the male and female worker as they exist in the etiquette books. Women’s vision is limited because passivity is not the tool used to imagine a life and a career. Women’s concerns are local, task-oriented, and concealed. Men have extensive vision, however, produced by their active, moving, self-appraising pursuit of individuality in the face of the vast cosmos.

The woman constructed by the pages of these books is small in philosophical stature. She receives instructions but is never in a position to give instructions. She is polite, agreeable, dressed appropriately, and she speaks simply and plainly when necessary. She does not spend her time conceiving of a future world. Strom points out that “Gendered categories of office work helped to maintain sexual difference and made certain that women would be confined to assisting, not directing men” (Strom 6). While the term “oppression” could certainly be

discussed in this context, my goal has been to interrogate the construction of gender narratives regardless of success in the office setting.

Themes of “visible” and “invisible” run throughout these etiquette books. One handbook directs: “Powder should not be visible. Rouge should not be visible. Eyeliner should not be visible. Mascara should not be visible” (Flynn 35). Although these directions refer to makeup, the metaphor certainly works on a larger scale. Throughout the texts, women’s clerical value is measured by an ability to remain unseen by the leaders in the power structure. Women can be assured, in some sense, that they are fulfilling their roles—only as long as no one sees them, as long as nothing about them stands out in any particular way. As I reviewed earlier, a similar notion can be seen in the way Scientific Management theories about efficiency reduced women’s jobs to isolated tasks. This prevented workers’ labor from being “seen” by management with the power to promote them. If their invisible work became “visible” it meant only that something had gone wrong.

What does an examination of these handbooks tell us? Do the handbooks represent a conspiracy to keep women low in the office hierarchy? No. We have to understand them in their context. The office community was not an entirely negative or oppressive.

Undoubtedly, the office community afforded women an opportunity for camaraderie and friendship they had not experienced before. The genre of office etiquette handbooks provides insight into women’s roles in the office place of the 1930s, and this study only begins to explore the rhetorical work of this genre.

CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS: TEXTUAL SURVEILLANCE,
SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT,
AND THE NRA PERSONNEL RECORDS

Thus far, this dissertation has concerned itself with two items. (1) The dissertation has concerned itself with framing its discussion in terms of professional communication genre theory. This theory indicates that professional communications employ distinct rhetorical categories to achieve historically defined communication goals. Further, according to genre theory, professional communications themselves are both generated by and generate historically definitive categories of professional subjects. (2) This dissertation has explained how one professional communications genre (the secretarial handbooks of the 1930s) created gender narratives that contributed to a cohesive corporate culture in the 1930s office. The discussion of the handbooks demonstrated the degree to which the handbooks, as a form of professional communication, employed gender-specific rhetorical categories to create the woman office worker and the male office worker. The genre of the professional etiquette handbooks called into existence gendered subjects tailored to be management-friendly in the office environment of the 1930s.

Thus, whereas Chapter Four discussed how one genre of professional communication creates concepts of gender that do rhetorical work in the office, Chapter Five uses genre theory to discuss how personnel records manage individual historical subjects through textual representations. To do so, Chapter Five examines another example of professional communication: National Recovery Administration (NRA) personnel records of the 1930s.

A careful line must be drawn between what Chapter Five aims to do and what it does not aim to do: this chapter aims to investigate genre formation, as well as the rhetorical work of existing genres within the NRA documents. It does not aim to prove that the subject genres in the handbooks from Chapter Four actually themselves caused, created, or in any way existed in a one-to-one cause and effect relationship with the NRA workers and NRA rhetorical categories discussed in this chapter. The handbook chapter discussed gendered worker narratives as constructed within handbooks; Chapter Five discusses professional communication genres as constructed within NRA forms and how these forms contributed to as well as reflect the management methods of the 1930s. Chapter Five divides its discussion into five major parts.

- **Part I** provides an abbreviated history of the National Recovery Act and its relation to the personnel records.
- **Part II** inventories the NRA personnel records and offers further context for them via a discussion of the era of red tape.
- **Part III** defines two concepts I have articulated from my genre analysis of the NRA records: textual surveillance and genre calibration. These terms draw on both Latour's concept of immutable mobiles and Frederick Taylor's theories of Scientific Management, both of which are also reviewed in Part III.
- **Part IV** is a genre analysis of the portion of the NRA records I am categorizing as "Application Materials." The application materials are divided into three subcategories based on formatting:

(a) Handwritten letters

(b) Typed letters

(c) Application Forms

- **Part V** is an analysis of the rhetorical work of the Job Description Questionnaires as an intact genre of the National Recovery Administration personnel.

PART I. THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RECOVERY ACT: A NEW WORKER FOR A NEW DEAL

An analysis of personnel records from a 1930s office might have taken this study to any number of sites, but the personnel records examined in this chapter are from offices created by Franklin Roosevelt's 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA).³⁹ This gives the records an extra layer of interest; essentially I am talking about the hyper documentation in records pertaining to government personnel who worked for an organization charged with the task of conducting a kind of hyper documentation nationally, the National Recovery Administration (NRA). That is because the National Industrial Recovery Act spawned the National Recovery Administration, an organization that then created hundreds of national and regional offices charged with creating, reviewing, and enforcing codes enacted by the NIRA.

The records considered in this dissertation were kept by various NRA Regional offices in the Midwest.⁴⁰ There is no way of knowing whether the content of the personnel records was

³⁹ The National Industrial Recovery Act is sometimes referred to as simply the National Recovery Act (NRA). This NRA acronym is also used in reference to the National Recovery Administration. To avoid confusion, in this study the Act itself is referred to as the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and the organization it spawned as the National Recovery Administration (NRA).

⁴⁰ Nebraska, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota were all considered Midwest offices.

affected by its relation to the NRA, but I believe the overlap is worth pointing out. After all, one manifestation of the NIRA was the increased record-keeping required by the National Recovery Administration. As the number and size of businesses increased, so did the files. Business records became more extensive at the turn of the 19th century as companies sought ways to keep track of financial transactions. Record-keeping really took off after WWI when, for example, returning soldiers qualified for military benefits such as health care and life insurance and there was a sudden need to officially document their progress.

The advent of a paper trail reshaped the way employees were managed. At least two competing theories of office management existed in the 1930s. One was the earlier theory, a naturalistic style of management that was referred to as “the old rule of thumb” by office-management expert Frederick Taylor. It was an organic organizational style that emphasized individual talents and immediate needs. Job descriptions were generally not on record. Things needed to be done and someone needed to do them, and labels did nothing to change that. This meant two people with the same job might make very different amounts of money, and someone who excelled at their job might be assigned tasks not necessarily part of their current job, thereby giving them an opportunity to move up or on to better-paying more prestigious jobs in the company. There was a considerable amount of wiggle room in this system, as opposed to a system governed strictly by job descriptions, flow charts, and task lists. Under the “old rule of thumb,” businesses were more like a family, where natural skills dictated task requirements. The person available completed a task—not necessarily someone who had a job description matching the task. Some felt this style of office management lead

to cronyism and other unfair labor practices. These criticisms intensified when the chaos of the office intensified, a chaos created by a changing office landscape.

This is where Scientific Management and other systemized theories of office structure come in. These theories contended the rule of thumb was inefficient and that instead of personal instincts the office needed precise job descriptions, a clearly delineated chain of command, and a strict architecture of operation. Scientific Management believed in “A place for everything and everything in its place”; this made some managers feel less anxiety.

The office landscape change most relevant to my study is the entry of large numbers of women into the business world. As detailed above, women entered the office in large numbers after WWI. Quite literally they changed the face of the office. Everything changed—conversations, sexual dynamics, power plays, and technology. Even the spatial layout of the office changed, as women were often pooled together in rooms away from the central office traffic (Follek). As liberating as this might have been for women, it created a never before seen chaos in the previously predictable, staid office place. Not only did women start working in offices, more people in general did. WWI brought increased record-keeping, which created the need for larger offices and larger staffs. Many times, institutions respond to chaos by trying to enforce order, and the best way to do that was to institute rules and procedures. Hence the detailed—perhaps overly detailed—processes people refer to as “red tape”—one form here, another form there. Get approval here. Get a signature there. Copy three supervisors on this document. This process is what I am calling textual surveillance, a term that will be defined further in Part II. As these personnel records illustrate, the smallest

request required several forms and permissions. Some of the other changes that occurred are detailed in Chapter Three, but they included reclassifying many men's jobs as management even though their actual jobs did not change. These changes took place on the local office level throughout industry, aided by the mission of the National Recovery Administration..

Situating the Records: An Abbreviated History of the NRA

Unquestionably, the National Industrial Recovery Act merits a thorough rhetorical study. A study of that depth does not serve my purposes here, however, so what follows is a brief review of its most immediately relevant aspects. The National Industrial Recovery Act was passed on June 13, 1933 as a part of what historians have called FDR's "First 99 days" where he quickly created his "alphabet soup" (WPA, CCC, WSA) plan to revitalize the United States economy.

The nation was in crisis, and the NIRA was a direct response to that crisis. Historian Arthur Schlesinger characterizes it this way: "The heart of the American economy was neither

finance nor agriculture but industry; and that heart was only beating faintly" (87). Roosevelt hoped to get that heart beating soundly again by doing two main things: 1) Jump-starting industry through the enactment of regulatory codes and 2) Creating jobs instantly by employing people to deal with all these codes.



Figure 5.1. Blue Eagle
Graphic of NRA Blue Eagle, ca. 1933; Records of the National Recovery Administration [NRA], 1927-1937; Records Group 9 (NWDNS-9-X); National Archives

According to the wording of the National Industrial Recovery Act, the new standards were needed because “A national emergency productive of widespread unemployment and disorganization of industry, which burdens interstate and foreign commerce, affects the public welfare, and undermines the standards of living of the American people, is hereby declared to exist” (Act). The “disorganization of industry” was the major focus. Roosevelt and his advisors felt that the growth of industry in the early 1900s had not been properly audited. There were as many standards and practices as there were businesses, and once the Great Depression set in, it was difficult to assess where real growth was possible. Businesses could measure their profits and progress in any manner they chose, which made assessments of the economy unproductive. Roosevelt felt the disorganization was preventing him from instituting the infrastructure of economic recovery; thus, the National Industrial Recovery Act was brought into existence to regulate the new economy. (Schlesinger, Gallagher)

The National Industrial Recovery Act’s stated goals were ambitious, to say the least. Many of them were broad reaching and general. In many ways it was a fishing expedition designed to fix what FDR was not sure was broken. The National Industrial Recovery Act threw a net over all industries and all of their practices by instituting “voluntary” codes pertaining to such things as trade regulations, production rates, wages, workers rights, and collective bargaining. The hope was these codes would spur the economy by increasing competition. Other NRA goals included enacting policy:

- To remove obstructions to the free flow of interstate and foreign commerce which tend to diminish the amount thereof

- To provide for the general welfare by promoting the organization of industry for the purpose of cooperative Action among trade groups
- To induce and maintain united Action of labor and management under adequate governmental sanctions and supervision
- To eliminate unfair competitive practices
- To promote the fullest possible utilization of the present productive capacity of industries, to avoid undue restriction of production (except as may be temporarily required)
- To increase the consumption of industrial and agricultural products by increasing purchasing power
- To reduce and relieve unemployment, to improve standards of labor
- To rehabilitate industry and to conserve natural resources (Act)

A mere three days after the National Industrial Recovery Act was put into law, FDR created the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and put General Hugh S. Johnson in charge. In 1934, Michael Gallagher, a law professor in Chicago, said this of this new political animal: “The NRA [is] distinctly and completely a new administrative bureau. It is a marvelous fabric composed of a multitude of functioning units, with advisory and consultative divisions, all coordinated and interrelated, with defined jurisdictions and variegated duties and powers” (21). The complexity of the NRA infrastructure as it relates to Scientific Management will be addressed later in this chapter, but it is important to its story to note here that the NIRA and the NRA represented a monumental focus of regulatory power that had no precedent in U.S. history. This power was broad and far-reaching, and it was what brought the Act to its

end. Current historian Anthony Badger points out that “The National Recovery Administration gave...government almost wartime powers over production, wages, and prices” (66). Although advocates for the NIRA envisioned a dynamic where “Business would work with government to prevent over-production, to prevent unfair wages, and to eliminate improper working conditions,” the fear of government control was too much for many people” (Schlesinger 98).

The NRA gained support quickly, due mostly to the government’s savvy rhetoric tying strict adherence to the NIRA to True Patriotism. Johnson created a simple Blue Eagle symbol, shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, as a unifying device. “[...] the NRA eagle appeared everywhere—on newspaper mastheads, on store windows, even girls in the chorus”

(Leuchtenburg 66). Eleanor Roosevelt herself would deliver Blue Eagle signs to businesses for display. As one of his early administrative acts, Hugh Johnson launched what was essentially a gigantic propaganda drive to increase wages and limit hours. Employers were asked to “voluntarily” sign the President’s Reemployment Agreement, “[...] a blanket code which provided for a 35-hour work week and a 40 cents per hour minimum wage



Figure 5.2. Solidarity
NRA Blue Eagle on restaurant, ca. 1933;
Records of the National Recovery
Administration [NRA], 1927-1937;
Records Group 9 (NWDNS-9-X); National
Archives

for industrial workers” (Badger 83). General Johnson put it pretty clearly: “Those who are not with us are against us, and the way to show that you are a part of this great army of the New Deal is to insist on this symbol of solidarity” (Schlesinger 84). Jump-starting the

economy was the central goal of the NIRA and the New Deal, in general, but just as important to Roosevelt at the time was the psyche of the American public. The Depression made people scared of the future and cautious in their hope. Roosevelt hated that, and to his credit, the “[...] NRA gave the American people for a fleeting moment a tremendous sense of national solidarity. ...For all its defects, [it] represented an essential continuity which in the face of crisis helped preserve American unity” (Schlesinger 88). For a short time, it felt like a country working together.

This afterglow quickly changed to frustration and resistance. “Housewives complained about high prices, businessmen about government edicts, and workers about inadequacy of 7 (a)”⁴¹ (Leuchtenburg 67). Various codes were viewed as abuses of power. The Act certainly created more jobs for lawyers, as the lawsuits against the U.S. government began before the ink was dry. Public sentiment began to turn quite negative. Although the codes enacted by the NRA were “voluntary” the fact that the President had the power to invoke involuntary codes anywhere he wanted made people start referring to FDR’s “dictator-ship by statute” (Gallagher 10).

The NRA had barely gotten started before it was over. Although there were numerous lawsuits concerning the NIRA, the case that finally ended the Act involved states’ rights. The 1935 case of the Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States went to the U.S. Supreme Court where the justices ruled the NRA code system was unconstitutional. Schechter Poultry

⁴¹ Section 7 (a), an often overlooked statute of the NIRA, provided workers the right to organize and bargain collectively using representatives of their own choosing.

was a small poultry dealer in New York City whose legal fees were paid for by the Iron and Steel Institute, an organization anxious to see the end of the NIRA. The court said the NIRA was attempting to regulate commerce that was not interstate in character. Further, the Supreme Court found that the codes did not respect the checks and balances system of the U.S. government, since codes were enacted without involving the legislative branch at all. As a piece of legislation, some still consider it an important and historic act for its vision, as well as its child labor and worker union codes. In the end it might have been too much too soon for a 1930s economy just beginning to heal from The Depression.

PART II. NRA RECORDS AND THE BIRTH OF RED TAPE

The mass of office paper work that exists in today's business world is accepted as the way complex business practices are recorded and inventoried; in fact, it has become a cultural icon. We 'cut through red tape', 'follow the paper trail', climb 'mountains' of paper work, joke about filling out forms in triplicate, and the overflowing desktop "IN" box is a symbol of the oppressive cubicle job. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 below serve as perfect examples of how this manic bureaucracy, particularly in its inception, can be comical, and capable of actually impeding communication rather than facilitating it.

Both the first memo (see Figure 5.3. Memo from C.E. Hazard to A.F. Cook) and the second one (see Figure 5.4. Memo from James O'Neill to all Executive Assistants) read as surreal conveyances of code in the form of NRA document numbers: "There is submitted herewith form 400 forms 401, 412, 412, and standard form 8, Oath of Office, for Mr. Frederick A. Weymouth...Form 417 will be submitted [later]". The second memo even suggests that this

memo will “promote orderly procedure.” Perhaps it will, as long as readers can get through the eight numbered paragraphs containing eleven different tasks and seven different forms to complete. The eleven tasks include completing “the personal history side of four Forms 401.” Quite possibly we are seeing an early draft of this kind of memo and later revisions improved both delivery and audience awareness. In its current version, though, clarity has been replaced by efficiency. “Prior to completing the Form 402 each Executive Assistant will receive the completed [Form 409]...will prepare the Forms 404 and 405 as modified by the new Act...will prepare a chart of his organization. Suggestions contained in Form 410 may be of assistance....” These two memos illustrate what JoAnne Yates calls the “complex and extensive formal communication system depending heavily on written documents of various sorts” (52) that began to develop in the office as early as the late 1800s.

By the middle of the 1800s there were hints of the increase in written communication. Prior to this time, though, according to JoAnne Yates in *Control Through Communication*, early nineteenth century businesses were “generally small, family affairs” that operated with “informal communication, principally by word of mouth” (xv). Yates traces the evolution of internal office documentation to the years between 1850 and 1920:

[W]hen a new philosophy of management based on system and efficiency arose, and under its impetus internal communication came to serve as a mechanism for managerial coordination and control of organizations. The informal and primarily oral mode of interaction gave way to a complex and extensive formal communication system depending heavily on written documents of various sorts... These technologies also affected the function

NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION

(43)

MEMORANDUM

DATE August 31, 1935To A. F. Cook, Regional DirectorFrom C. E. Hazard, Acting State Director

Subject _____

There is submitted herewith form 400; forms 401, 412, 413, and standard form 8, Oath of Office, for Mr. Frederick A. Weymouth, who will enter his duties as NRA Field Adjuster on a per diem basis, effective September 3, and will continue such duties to the expiration of business on September 11. At that time form 417 will be submitted. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
C. E. Hazard
Acting State Director

CEH:DT

Figure 5.3. Memo from C.E. Hazard to A.F. Cook

(120)

MEMORANDUM

April 30, 1935

TO: Executive Assistants
 FROM: Control Officer
 SUBJECT: Personnel

In anticipation of the passage of new legislation affecting the NRA it is proposed at this time to complete the bulk of necessary work connected with personnel routine. Advantage will be taken of this opportunity to establish a revised personnel system designed to promote orderly procedure, to assure uniform and fair classification for new appointments, and to enable present personnel to be considered for more favorable positions.

1. Each employee will complete the Form 400, adding to question A-3 his or her county and congressional district.
2. Each employee will complete the personal history side of four Forms 401. After this has been done, the Personnel Section will complete the other side.
3. Each Executive Assistant will prepare Form 402 for every position, whether occupied or vacant, under his jurisdiction. (See paragraph 8 below.)
4. Each Executive Assistant will complete one copy of the Form 403, filling in the name of the present incumbent of the position on the second part of this form.
5. The Personnel Office, at the earliest possible date after the passage of the Act, will prepare the Forms 404 and 405 as modified by the new Act.
6. Executive Assistants will prepare the Form 406 for such employees as should, in their judgment, be considered for a position of different grade.
7. Prior to completing the Form 402 each Executive Assistant will receive from each employee under his jurisdiction the completed Form 409. Suggestions contained in Form 410 may be of assistance in this connection and will be made available to all employees.
8. Each executive assistant will prepare a chart of his organization following the suggested forms attached. The grade will be placed beside each name.

JAMES L. O'NEILL
 Control Officer

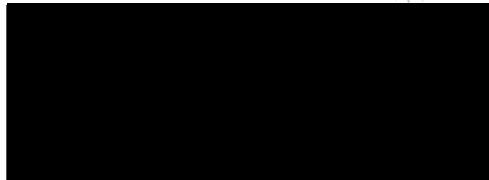


Figure 5.4. Memo from James L. O'Neill to Executive Assistants

and form of communication within the firm. New types of genres of communication developed, with orders, reports, memoranda, and meetings evolving to suit their managerial and technological contexts. (xv)

One of these new genres can be in the NRA records—the Job Description Questionnaire—and this genre is the focus of my analysis in Part V. Other documents, however, could not be categorized as coherent genres. The largest portion of the NRA records⁴², in fact, were similar in their intended action—applying for a job—but disparate in their format and content. It is because of this difference in genre status between the Job Questionnaires and the application materials that I have focused on these documents for my analysis. Although these categories do not encompass every record available to me, these documents create the office infrastructure of human resources—employee hiring, employee evaluation, and employee job description.

Records of the National Recovery Administration

It is important to this study that the National Recovery Administration offices were learning to do what the NIRA was asking U.S. industry to do: get organized. Part of that meant creating a paper trail. Organizational charts, which created textually-based class distinctions between employees, and job descriptions that required employees to develop a self-consciousness about their marked roles in the workplace, were part of the hyper-documentation of the office. Rather than risk being vague, owners and managers apparently

⁴² 258 documents out of the 341 total documents

became very interested in further enforcing these distinctions textually, exhibiting a kind of Will to Power—or, more characteristically, a will to management.

The textual traces of this will to management, the NRA personnel records examined in this dissertation, are currently housed by the Kansas City, Missouri National Archives in Records Administration in Record Group 9. These records, a collection of nearly 350 professional communications documents, are NIRA personnel documents from Midwest regional offices including Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 inventory the boxes containing the NRA records I analyzed. Part IV of Chapter Three details the methods I used to choose Boxes 69 and 70 from the NRA archives.

PART III. DEFINING TERMS AND CONTEXT

As a way of introducing two terms important to my analysis—textual surveillance and genre calibration—Part III reviews both tenets of Scientific Management and Latour’s concept of immutable mobiles. The overview of Taylor’s Scientific Management theories, also called Taylorism, offers further context for the 1930s when these NRA personnel records were circulating.

Textual surveillance and genre calibration are terms I have articulated to understand the bureaucratic life of these personnel records. Textual surveillance gets at their role as agents of documentation, while genre calibration speaks to the incremental changes the records undergo. These personnel records played a role in the 1930s office culture where management sought stricter documentation of employees (textual surveillance), but these

**Table 5.1. Records of National Recovery Administration
Record Group 9, Box 69, Row 15**

Folder number	Doc. #'s (# of pages)	Document Types	General Contents of Folder
1	1-12 (12)	Internal docs.	Mildred Titzel annual leave
2	13-39 (27)	Internal docs.	Full application packet Bosses communicating over salary, hiring, promotion
3	40-45 (6)	Internal docs.	Report of NRA Field Employees
6	46-53 (8)	4 App. Docs 4 Internal docs	Blank application form Per diem request form Flow chart of positions
7	54-58 (5)	Internal docs.	Background memo on employee Moses Smith
8	59-63 (5)	3 Internal docs. 2 App docs.	Request from employee for reference Reference Letter from national office concerning NRA codes
10	64-75 (12)	6 App. Docs 6 Internal docs	Gwen Geech application/request for transfer Letters of approval for request
11	No docs	N/A	N/A
12	76-81 (6)	App. Docs	Thelma Johnson application materials
14	82-93 (12)	App. Docs	Hazel Webber application materials
15	94-97 (4)	App docs.	Roy Wilson application materials
16	98 (1)	Internal docs.	Letter saying John gross has job
17	99-109 (11)	App docs.	Agnes Craft application materials
21	119-124 (6)	App docs	Lucille Smalley application materials
22	125-138 (14)	App docs	Mary Roche materials
24	139-146 (8)	App docs.	Norman Guster materials

**Table 5.2. Records of the National Recovery Administration
Record Group 9, Box 70, Row 15**

Folder number	Doc. #'s (# of pages)	Document Types	General Contents of Folder
1	147-151 (4)	3 app 2 internal	Beverly Brown application Internal memos about Beverly Brown Beverly Brown Job Description Questionnaire
3	152-189 (38)	32 app 6 internal	Men's application materials Letters of reference Reponses from A.F. Cook Telegrams concerning national office reorganization
4	190-291(102)	App	Application Materials: Handwritten letters, typed letters, application forms, etc.
6	292-314 (23)	Internal	Paperwork regarding transfers between offices, telegrams containing employee evaluations
7	315-320 (6)	Internal	Inventory
8	321-325 (5)	Internal	Reclassification
9	326-331 (6)	Internal	Layoffs, salaries, job lists for several regional offices including Wyoming and Minnesota
10	332-335 (4)	Internal	Layoffs, salaries, job lists for several regional offices including South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa.
11	336-343 (8)	Internal	Document entitled "Future of NRA" appearing to correspond with court case making National Recovery Act null and void
12	344-346 (3)	Internal	Salaries
12A	347-351 (5)	Internal	List of positions for various regional offices, including Colorado, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa. Also, documents detailing possibilities for promotion

information-obtaining records were undergoing constant shifts of their own in terms of form and function. Textual surveillance is a product of the hyper documenting office of the 1930s, a practice sanctioned and encouraged by the 1933 enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act. It is a type of managerial control, which JoAnne Yates contends is the mechanism through which the operations of an organization are coordinated to achieve desired results: “Managerial control is essentially management as we now think of it” (xvi). The National Recovery NIRA’s goal was to articulate codes and rules to govern industry; its mission was to observe and regulate office processes previously governed by unspoken or unwritten rules. It sought to make the invisible visible, and it did this by creating and then managing employees textually through advanced systems of record keeping. Genre calibration is a term I am using to refer to the process that documents undergo in order to solidify their format and purpose.

Textual surveillance and genre calibration are terms that represent theoretical concepts about the way business communications manifest themselves on a day-to-day basis in an office setting. However, the terms also have a literal component, as personnel records possess agents of surveillance in their blank lines and spaces to be filled out, and the multiple versions of forms with the same function (e.g. application forms) assume there has been change of some kind over time. I cannot point to documented occurrences of an employee being materially affected by the textual surveillance of the NRA personnel records, and I lack the information necessary to put this set of NRA records on a calibration timeline. Instead, my goal is to conceptualize the nuanced activities of professional communication texts in the creation of a cohesive corporate culture in the 1930s— a goal in concert with understanding

the handbooks as part of this same homogenizing, enculturating process. Just as the handbooks both reflected and created gender narratives operating in office culture, textual surveillance and genre calibration enable one another to exist. To increase the efficiency with which information is obtained, forms must be revised.

Submitted for Your Approval: Mr. Taylor's Amazing Scientific Stopwatch

Scientific Management, in its essence, consists of a certain philosophy, which results, as before stated, in a combination of the four great underlying principles of management: 1) The development of a true science. 2) The scientific selection of the Workman. 3) His scientific education and development and 4) Intimate friendly cooperation between the management and the men. (68)

The parallels between the surveillance-based management strategies of Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management and the management strategies exhibited in the NRA personnel records are striking, but not surprising. Taylor's theories represent a physical, literal surveillance of the office, while textual surveillance operates in the theoretical realm. The theory that surveillance of the worker will minimize sloth and maximize owner profits, of course, was nothing new in the 1930s. But by 1930, surveillance of the worker had recently undergone a type of scientific revolution. The heyday of Scientific Management was the early 1900s. This management theory had revolutionized the methods by which manager/owners supervised and maximized the efficiency of their workers.

Lisa Fine observes that even though tracing Scientific Management's influence on any one managerial practice may be difficult, the general influence of Taylor's Scientific Management upon actual management practices is established:

Although it is difficult to determine how often managers adopted scientific techniques in their offices during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the ever-increasing numbers of clerical workers certainly provided the occasion for such reorganization. (90)

Also important to note in the above quote is that Fine articulates another chicken/egg overlap in the forces of change in the 1930's office. Was Scientific Management a way to make the increasingly large workforce more efficient? Or did the increasingly large workforce make instituting the fashionable Scientific Management techniques possible? The answer is both, and it serves as a reminder that creating a history of professional communication involves an analysis of power dynamics more than it does business needs. Being committed to efficiency under the shadow of the great Blue Eagle was not enough. Progress was needed, a progress that could be identified by name. Efficiency plans were instituted by many more than Frederick Taylor, but they did not come with the terminology Scientific Management offered. Frederick Winslow Taylor was one of the greatest entrepreneurs of all time. A savvy business communicator, Taylor packaged and labeled his system, making it digestible to those in charge of office budgets. His terminology also allowed the various mutations his plan would undergo in different offices to be downplayed, a testament to the concrete power of professional communication. Taylor's concrete influence is difficult to trace; according to Fine,

[W]hat is important to remember is that the rigorous application of [Taylor's] scientific management principles to the running of the office, and the resultant routinization and rationalization of some stenography and typing positions, began after woman had already entered this occupation. (Fine 89)

It can be reasonably posited that the NRA management practices existed in a managerial culture that was generally influenced by Taylor's theories of Scientific Management.

Scientific Management, in other words, serves as a touchstone to illuminate how professional communications strategies of the NRA serve as similar forms of scientific worker surveillance over woman office workers of the 1930s.

Taylor's theories thus serve as an acknowledged model of scientific worker surveillance, as a reference point from which the reader can understand how other later office practices enunciated a kind of scientific-management surveillance strategy. Much as Taylor's strategies attempted to put workers under surveillance via a manager holding a stopwatch and measuring the movements of the workers, NRA personnel documents attempted to put workers under surveillance via a system of office documents. By drawing comparisons between Taylor's managerial methods on the one hand and, on the other hand, the documents referenced in the tables set out above, one can understand how NRA office forms constituted a textual system of surveillance.

So understood in this section, Scientific Management's philosophies are very similar to those of the NRA personnel records. For instance, as will be explained more fully below, Scientific Management and the NRA personnel records both seek to develop application materials that

adequately reveal the qualities of the applicant and both involve the standardization of work methods. They both rely on the lack of upward mobility for workers. They both aspire towards the specialization of management techniques. To understand these similarities, it is now time to become acquainted with Frederick Taylor's theory of Scientific Management.

The Scientific Management of the Worker

F. W. Taylor formalized the principles of scientific management, and the fact-finding approach put forward and largely adopted was an alternative to a more instinct-driven, emotional style of management and decision-making that family-owned and operated businesses used. A manager may decide who to hire based on a so-called gut instinct about the person's character or because he had a good conversation with them about politics. Taylor would say that kind of management does not have to be dissolved entirely. Taylor took his philosophy very seriously, comparing it, in fact, to global catastrophe:

We can see our forests vanishing, our water-powers going to waste, our soil being carried by floods into the sea; and the end of our coal and our iron is in sight. But our larger wastes of human effort, which go on every day through such of our acts as are blundering, ill-directed, or inefficient, and which Mr. Roosevelt refers to as a lack of "national efficiency," are less visible, less tangible, and are but vaguely appreciated. (16)

What's a man to do when the work force of this great country is blundering its success away?

What was needed, according to Taylor, was a scientific solution. The answer was not the individual will or charisma of a handful of business leaders. Taylor believed that individual leadership hinged on variances in personal philosophy and these human variances lead to

chaos and inefficiency. Inefficiency, of course, costs time and Taylor made literal the notion that time is money. His practices stressed the link between and time and money as opposed to the link between product and money, allowing companies to more concentrate on increasing their profit rather than simply running an overall productive business.

Taylor was able to make this link visible to companies this by conducting the now-famous "Time Studies" experiments that consisted of on-site investigation of employee habits. Taylor believed the most dangerous enemies to the effective use of time in the business world were the twin-bogeymen, "Loafing and Soldiering."

This loafing or soldiering proceeds from two causes. First, from the natural instinct and tendency of men to take it easy, which may be called natural soldiering. Second, from more intricate second thought and reasoning caused by their relations with other men, which may be called systematic soldiering. The younger and less experienced men are taught this by their elders. The remedy for this inefficiency lies in systematic management, rather than in searching for some unusual or extraordinary man. (Taylor 44)

The solution to loafing and soldiering was implementing a system that transformed its workers into cogs in sync with the overall machine. Rather than having two workers responsible for a variety of tasks on a "need" basis, each worker was assigned distinct tasks in which they could invest their complete, focused energy. If workers were able to do this consistently, it allowed a company's needs to be standardized. Further, this eliminated the need for workers to rely on instinct for any of their actions, thereby transforming thought and hesitation into production.

Heightened efficiency was achieved by eliminating waste, by letting no motion or energy go undirected. The method to creating this system was scientific time studies. These experiments were not technologically complex. Someone would be assigned a stopwatch and would spend the day counting the seconds each employee took on an individual task, including the time spent between each consecutive action of this task. Averaging these times, an allowable target time was computed. In such a way, Taylor could break each task into smaller and smaller components to be managed. According to Taylor himself,

The concept that breaking tasks into smaller and smaller tasks allows the determination of the optimum solution to the task. The man in the planning room, whose specialty is planning ahead, invariably finds that the work can be done more economically by subdivision of the labour; each act of each mechanic, for example, should be preceded various preparatory acts done by other men. (37)

Via these time studies, Taylor's theory of management focused on the efficiency of the producer of the product rather than focusing on the quality of the product. Presumably, by creating efficient workers, a quality product would naturally follow or at least be easier to attain. To manage this human producer most effectively, thus maximizing efficiency and presumably profit, Taylor outlined what I call four “core” features that constituted a scientific form of management: (1) time study, or, the 'task idea' of management; (2) functional or specialized supervision; (3) standardization of tools, implements, and movements; and (4) a routing system. Taylor lists each of these features as separate from the others, but they overlap considerably. For example, one way standardizing movements manifested itself was through the establishment of a rigid routing system. In the context of the office, that might

mean the “movement” of requesting annual leave would become standardized by a series of forms, followed by a designated route those forms needed to take. Taylor's principles show up in the way the NRA used forms to standardize the actions of employees.

Textual surveillance was intensified and diversified by genre calibration—the active evolution of office texts toward a more perfect union of form and function. When regulations require documents to be revised according to how effectively they ascertain the most 'useful' information, they are calibrated using managerial edicts about relevant details concerning workers. In the calibration process, some questions are deleted, some are added, some are refined, some spaces are made smaller and some bigger, but the goal is always toward creating the document most capable of creating a productive textual representation of the employee.

The majority of the records in my analysis lack a discernible genre coherent in terms of both form and action, even though these NRA records passed through the same office over a short period of time. While I cannot pinpoint a clear starting point for any one document's formatting, the concept of genre calibration is present, which is a phenomenon I will expand on in Part IV. Calibration maximizes documents' ability to extract uniform details about employees and office processes. Stability in genres produces similar textual representations of employees, making managing these workers as commodities much easier. This dissolution of difference was a reaction to the chaos created by a changing office landscape.

The manifestation of the National Industrial Recovery Act relevant to the personnel records is the hyper documentation of employees it demanded. Textual surveillance is accomplished through a series of information-obtaining devices, and these personnel records obtain information employing several different genres. The variances in format and content are part of the calibration process—management’s attempt to standardize employee records by first standardizing the information collection devices. From these personnel records this calibration appears to have been done mostly by trial and error. In the office context, that meant everything from a job application to an oath of loyalty to field reports had to be revised until the “right” form was written (see Figures 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7). Each of these contributes to the textual creation of the employee; the textual employee emerges out of the types of information each form demands. Their textual identity is shaped by the formats of the documents that concern them.

Inscriptions and Immutable Mobiles

By requiring potential as well as existing employees to fill out paper work for every aspect of their work lives, a company successfully defines the employee in its own terms, transforming the worker into an inscription, “a sign...a piece of paper, a trace” (Latour 307). Latour’s term inscription is an umbrella term with various subterms, all of which are related to his larger theoretical apparatus, Actor Network Theory. I will not take on the formidable task of addressing Actor Network Theory or Latour on a large scale; to ignore him, however, would be to miss a vital articulation of what’s important about the NRA personnel records. In this case, the term applies to the textual product called the employee.

137

PERSONNEL SECTION

NAME: Hazel June Webber Date January 16, 1935
 (First Name) (Middle Name) (Last Name)

WASHINGTON RESIDENCE - Street: June 15, 1909 Date of Birth:
 City: Walnut 5108 Telephone:
 State: Yes Single:

LEGAL RESIDENCE - Street: Omaha City: Nebraska State: Two Married:
 When Last There: White Dependents:
 Race:

Are you in good health: Yes

EDUCATION: (Give number of years opposite each and name of college)

Elementary School: 8—Exline Public Schools
 High School: 4—Exline Public Schools
 College: 2—Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa
 Degrees:
 Business School: 1—Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa

EXPERIENCE

TITLE OF POSITION	NAME OF FIRM	DATES	SALARY
Teacher of Eng. & Com.	Casey Public School	1928-1930	\$100 mo.
Teacher of Eng. & Com.	Wyoming Pub. School	1930-1932	\$120 mo.
Teacher of Eng. & Com.	Palo Alto Bus. Univ.	1932-1933	\$50 mo.
Secretary to Attorney	Vernon Johnson, Atty.	1933-1934	None
Legal Stenographer	Federal Land Bank of Omaha	Aug. 13 to Dec. 1	\$70 mo.

STATE PRESENT BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS:

Firm Name: Regional NRA, #7
 Address: 788 Saunders-Kennedy Bldg.
 Position:
 Salary or Compensation:

WHOM TO NOTIFY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

Name: U. S. Webber
 Relation: Father
 Address: 1506 N. 34 Street, Omaha
 Telephone: Walnut 5108

ENDORSED OR REQUESTED BY:

Figure 5.5. Page from Application Packet

(65)

Standard Form No. 8
(Approved by the President, May 22, 1926)

OATH OF OFFICE

Prescribed by Section 1757. Revised Statutes of the United States

National Recovery Administration **Omaha, Nebraska**
(Department or Establishment) (Bureau or Office)

Regional Director's Office

I, **Hervey Brown**, do
(Name in full, printed or typed)

solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. SO HELP ME GOD.

[Redacted Signature]
(Signature of Appointee)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this **29th** day of **December**, A. D. 193**4**

at **Omaha** (City or place), **Nebraska** (State)

[SEAL]

[Redacted Notary Seal]

Notary Public

NOTE.—If the oath is taken before a Notary Public the date of expiration of his commission should be shown.

Position to which appointed **Stenographic Work**
Date of entrance on duty **December 29, 1934**

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1928 10-1689

Figure 5.6. Oath of Office

116

REPORT OF N. R. A. FIELD EMPLOYEES

Omaha Regional (Office) Period from Nov. 1 193Nov.15 1935.

I certify that the following employees were employed for the periods indicated in connection with emergency work this office is performing for the National Recovery Administration.

Approved:

Field Liaison Officer

(Name)
Regional (Title) Director
Omaha, Nebraska.

Subscribed and sworn to before me at _____
this ninth day of November, 1935.

Notary Public.
(Title)

Title and Name	Gross per Month	Period Covered	Gross Earned	Less 15%	Net Earned
Regional Director, A.F. Cook	\$6,800	Nov.1 - Nov.15			\$ 283.33 ✓
Adm Ass't & Ac Fld Rep., G.W. Kirtley	4,500	Nov.1 - Nov.15			187.50 ✓
Ass't Clk-Steno. Mary Roche	1,620	Nov.1 - Nov.15			67.50 ✓
Jr. Clk-Steno. Molly Dewey	1,440	Nov.1 - Nov.15			56.00* ✓
Junior Stenographers. Beverly Brown	1,260	Nov.1 - Nov.15			52.50 ✓
Lucille Smalley	1,260	Nov.1 - Nov.15			52.50 ✓
Hazel J. Webber	1,260	Nov.1 - Nov.15			45.00 ✓
Messenger Norman Guster	1,080	Nov.1 - Nov.15			

*Payroll Section, Washington, informs one day's salary for L.W.O.P. on 10-19-35 will be deducted from salary of Molly Dewey for period 11-1/11-15.)

Form 309. 708



Figure 5.7. Report of NRA Field Employees

In *Pandora's Hope*, his 1999 book, Latour says an inscription:

[R]efers to all types of transformation through which an entity becomes materialized into a sign, an archive, a document, a piece of paper, a trace. Usually but not always inscriptions are two-dimensional, superimposable, and combinable. They are always mobile, that is, they allow new translations and articulations while keeping some types of relations intact. Hence they are also called “immutable mobiles,” a term that focuses on the movement of displacement and the contradictory requirements of the task. When immutable mobiles are cleverly aligned they produce the circulating references. (307)

In the case of the personnel records, Latour's “entity” is the employee. Through the course of filling out paper work that represents them in the office place these employees are “materialized into...an archive, a document, a piece of paper.” Employees may change departments, get promoted, revise their job descriptions, or undergo other what Latour calls “translations and articulations” but their essential identity as circumscribed by their textual representation remains “intact.” This phenomenon is what I am calling textual surveillance. By the mid-1930s, the time period I am analyzing, the initial eruption of work place changes, including women's presence on a large scale, had passed. What was left, then, was an office stabilizing its identity. Textual surveillance was a vital part of this stabilization; defining employees and their roles in a more designated way by creating their representations textually allowed companies to create an orderly, efficient office the way it should be. The office was clearly delimited with standard employees, standard positions, and standard goals.

This textual identity phenomenon is an “immutable mobile.” In the context of the personnel records immutable mobiles are “a natural strategy that forces stability by ‘freezing’ various parts of the representation with specifications or standards” (Ryder 26). This frozen representation is an example of an inscription. When regulations require documents to be revised according to how effectively they ascertain the most 'useful' information, they are calibrated toward forming a genre. As Latour puts it, “Actants enter into networked associations, which in turn define them, name them, and provide them with substance, Action, intention, and subjectivity” (Ryder 26). Actants in this case refers to the employees who are defined by their network, or office. Their existence within the company is by the terms and standards of the forms that contain their information.

Employees can only answer questions that are asked on the forms. They can only provide information when a slot is left for it. “[T]he networks in which they associate derive their nature” (28). In this case the network is constructed of human resources forms. There is no record of extenuating circumstances or immeasurable qualities at this level of surveillance. What does not fit on the forms is not part of the representation of the employee.

A Brief Sample of Textual Surveillance and Genre Calibration at Work in the Personnel Records

In conducting a genre analysis of the NRA personnel records I have articulated two terms to understand the rhetorical work of the records: textual surveillance and genre calibration. To explain textual surveillance and genre calibration better, at this point I am inserting two examples of NRA documents where this terminology can be applied: handwritten letters of

application that include personal life details⁴³, and application forms with interviewer comments on the back or margins. The handwritten letters of application are discussed in Part IVa within the context of other application materials types, but here the personal details are the focus.

First, some of the application letters from women seeking jobs working for the NRA included personal life details that explain why they must seek employment (see Figure 5.8). In her letter of application, Lola Cale says, “I am a widow, thirty-two years old and have two small daughters to care for.” The hiring manager may not believe information like being a single mother is relevant to Cale’s job candidacy, but it is my assumption that Lola clearly does. I posit her personal status is part and parcel of her application; it is one element of the package she offers for consideration.

Obviously, I have no way of knowing Cale’s intentions or strategies when writing the letter, but in trying to explain why unformatted comments matter in my study, I offer that in Lola Cale’s mind, offering this personal information does several things. First, it assures her reader that although she is not “young,” she is not “old.” She is thirty-two, an age that might suggest a perfectly seasoned office worker. Second, it suggests that her most recent priorities were her children, which is why she has not worked lately. Perhaps even more importantly, though, referencing her widow status highlights the fact that her needs are greater than those of a younger, single, childfree girl applying for the same job. This detail might make her

⁴³ I am using the term “personal life details” to refer to information such as illness, financial hardship, marital status, issues involving children, and any other information typically considered to fall on the personal side of the personal/business dichotomy. Applications ask for personal information such as name, address, date of birth, and education, but applications do not ask for “personal life details” as I have defined them here.

Omaha, Nebraska
January 11th '35

Mr Cook
City

Dear Sir:

Desiring to make application for a position in your office I take this method of getting in touch with you.

I am a widow, thirty-two years old and have two small daughters to care for. Have been graduated from High School and have had two years College work, I also have completed a six months Business Course, including shorthand and typing.

Figure 5.8. Lola Cale's handwritten letter of application

of a younger, single, childfree girl applying for the same job. This detail might make her appear eager and therefore harder-working than the average applicant. If Lola filled out an application form instead of writing a note, she would not have found a place on the application form to include this information. Lola's options within this application protocol are limited. She can leave out the details involving her children and her widow status and hope to bring them up in an interview, she can find a line with enough space left to squeeze in the information, or she can make her own space for it on the bottom or back of the application. None of these options is desirable. Squeezing it in somewhere smells of excuse-making, or worse, misreading the application form. Leaving it out altogether omits a circumstance that might separate her from the pool of applicants. One could read Cale's decision to include the information as business savvy audience awareness. That could certainly be part of it. Instead, however, I think it illustrates a kind of "common sense" women like Lola Cale might have applied to this process.

Lola's handwritten note devoid of any detail of her skills suggests that she does not have a knowledge of the business world application process; without that to rely on, Lola imagines what information a manager in the position to hire her might need to assess her worthiness. Perhaps she asks herself what information she would want if she were in the reader's position. In this instance, she decides he⁴⁴ needs to know her husband is dead and she has two kids to feed and clothe, and he is in the position to help her do that. Taking this theory further, Lola's strategy is a good one—hope that a man reading her note might take pity on

⁴⁴ Although it is possible the reader of letter could be female, Agnes Sterner addresses the letter "Dear Sir."

her, even imagine his own wife and children in this situation, and hire her. Important in this reading is that women are not lacking intelligence but enculturation.

It may be inappropriate for Lola to include personal information, but it is not lacking forethought, and in a previous office generation it might have been not only appropriate, but common. The rapidly evolving 1930s office, however, was in the midst of finding more “efficient” ways to assess potential employees, and it did not leave room for Lola Cale’s personal concerns. If employees were required to fill out an application form in order to seek a job it would allow management to remain at a safe distance from this kind of distinguishing personal detail. In an application form world, if Lola Cale wants management to know her predicament, she must make an active overture toward someone. Not only might Lola fear making such an active overture in this standardized environment, she may not even know how to make it, particularly if there is no form for it. Even if there is such a form, the way she can tell her story is limited by the format of the form itself. And if she fills out the form, her predicament still only exists textually, for better or worse. This illustrates just one power advantage afforded management by “freezing representation” using close textual surveillance.

Re-Thinking Marginalia

Although Lola Cale’s personal life details are not placed outside the letter or literally “on the margins,” at their essence they could be considered marginalia—scribbles and bits of information not worthy of a place within the central area. In the NRA application materials there is an application form; it does not allot space for personal life details such as the ones

Lola Cale is supplying, making them officially irrelevant in a worker's textual representation. Because she is writing a letter, Lola Cale has more agency in presenting her story. If she were filling out the application form the chances are good her self-representation would not be the same as it is here. I believe this discrepancy would be addressed by genre calibration. More applicants means more work for hiring managers, and the amount of work is increased by letters like Lola Cale's that contain some relevant information and some irrelevant information in a format difficult to skim. Lola's letter contains no white space to punctuate important facts. Lola's letter does not contain headings that might allow a reader to dismiss or accept her quickly. Lola's letter requires attentive reading if one is to extract the information necessary to decide whether or not to hire her. This is a largely inefficient undertaking, at least on the surface. By compiling a list of information used in the assessment of an applicant, either verbally or textually, management adapts or creates an application form that contains only questions and prompts that result in a textually summary of the applicant. Further, the application form prioritizes even that limited information through specialized formatting.

This conceptualization of women's personal details as marginalia begs mention of the metaphor between these comments and women's developing place in the office. Offices were expanded and furniture was moved to make a physical place for them to sit, but a larger scale adjustment on a philosophical level was difficult and sometimes slow.

Just as applicants included information not asked for on the eventual application forms, the NRA personnel records contain instances where interviewers made comments during or after

job interviews of potential employees. Figures 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 show comments made by interviewers Mr. Hall, and two unknown supervisors, respectively. Mr. Hall offers the comments “Dark”, “20+”, and “bright looking” while Figures 5.10 and 5.11 include “not too attractive personality --”, “I would cross her off.” and “About 35 yrs. Divorced, w/o kids.” The comments are “on the margins” most likely because they pertain to race or ethnicity (“Dark”), age (“20+”, “about 35 yrs.”), physical appearance (“bright looking”), personality (“not too attractive personality”), and marital/mother status or sexual orientation⁴⁵ (Divorced, w/o kids), which were all categories (except personality) that while they could be legally attained by employers, they were not asked for on application forms of that time. Does this suggest businesses were beginning to understand that certain subjects were inappropriate in an interview? There is no way of knowing definitively, but the marginal comments suggest hiring managers had their own criteria they used to assess applicants, but that the criteria were only discussed among other hiring managers.

For my purposes, it is important to compare these marks to the personal details of the application letters. Both types of comments detail information the author believed was vital to the audience’s “complete” knowledge of the applicant as a subject. Mr. Hall most likely had some sort of application from the interview, whether it was an unsolicited letter from the applicant or an application form the candidate was asked to fill out before the interview, both genres found in the NRA records.

⁴⁵ Although the “divorced” comment is most likely referring to marital status, it must be considered that it could also be a roundabout indication of sexual orientation.

A discussion of whether any of these interviewers is racist, ageist, or sexist is undoubtedly important, and would be necessary in some contexts. In my limited analysis, however, I will leave that to other scholars with the resources to do that discussion justice. My interest lies in what these documents of the 1930s did in terms of textual reproduction of the employee. In the limited scope of my study, what was written by Mr. Hall and the others is less important than where it was written, and what I do know is that none of them had a form created to catalogue interviewer reaction to interviewees. This did not prevent him from recording details he either wanted to remember later, wanted someone else to see, or both, which illustrates the ability of users of texts to resist the metaphorical and literal boundaries being imposed upon them. In the case of the NRA records, these boundaries were resisted on all sides.

Perhaps to these interviewers, all of the applicants were essentially the same, and the information they wrote on the back of the application form was what set one applicant apart from the other. On the other end of it, Gwen Geech, an applicant for an NRA job, who would later become a Field Representative for the NRA, is writing an application letter and seeks to make visible to the reader this same kind of information. In both instances discussed here there is resistance to the available textual representation of the worker, the homogenization process of the efficient workplace. The applicant fills out forms. These forms attempt to contain the person by provided a form with limited space and scope, but in these instances the person is not contained.

Discursive practices are never neutral, and office paperwork is no exception. This tightening of labels and job expectations might have simplified office procedures under the National Industrial Recovery Act, but this simplification produced a hierarchy of worker power that was more stable than before. This was part of the power of textual surveillance, though. Interacting with employees as textual representations streamlined management structure. There was very little coloring outside the lines, which made everything much neater.

Interviewed by Mr Hall =

*Dark-
Bright looking
age 20 +.*

Figure 5.9. Interviewer comments on back of application

Miss Wolfson:
 2 ½ years actual work.
 Mantua - 1 summer - general office
 People's - year + half - stenographic
 Piquette - half year - . . . (left after this)

Not now employed: -
 Will come on trial
 Not very attractive personality -
 I would cross her off.

Figure 5.10 Comments by interviewers

About 35 yrs.
 Divorced, former resident of Combs
 no children } living here with sister & brother.
 Can take shorthand, willing to work for nothing.

Figure 5.11 Comments by interviewers

PART IV. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Application materials are at the center of my analysis of the National Recovery Administration personnel records in part because they make up the bulk of the texts available to me. Further, they concern what is most vital to an office place, yet hardest to manage—its workers. In order to be considered in the category of “application material” for my purposes, a document needed only to directly ask for a job or request an interview in order to get a job. Categorizing the documents as application materials in this way was not difficult. Nearly all of the documents not on NRA stationery or not otherwise authored by the NRA office were application materials.

The application process paints a picture of office communication still in its early stages. The applicant, outside the office, has some idea what it means to apply for a job. In that sense, there is uniformity. Because this collection of application materials varied so much in terms of format (typed letters, handwritten letters, letters as resume, completed application forms, and extensive application packets) and content (just personal life details, personal life details and experience, just experience, experience and recommendations, experience in resume format), however, I did not address them as a coherent, cohesive, genre; their formats and actions were not uniform enough to be replicated by other applicants. Within these NRA records, the genre of “application” is not yet stable—even for now.

Part of the genre development process, according to Carolyn Miller, is the stage where “The new is made familiar through the recognition of relevant similarities” and “those similarities become constituted as a type” (Genre 156-157). The genre of the application that exists in the

contemporary business world is indeed “[...] a conventional category of discourse based on large-scale typification of rhetorical action [...] (163) but not all of the application materials from the NRA records participate in that genre. In the iterations within the NRA records, the genre is still being calibrated. Potential hires are offering the information they deem relevant, management is weighing how much of that offered information they want, management is also negotiating what they want that is not being offered, and an application form is being constructed to elicit that information.

One approach I took in reading the application materials was to find out which of them participate in the application genre. I defined “application genre” by constructing a list of characteristics and features a documents must contain in order to “meet expectations” of the genre (Foss). Using the information contained in the application materials in the NRA records, as well as my own concepts of an application, the genre of an application must contain the following: contact information (name and address), work history/experience, educational background, matching skills, references or references available, and some strategic format. The application materials are divided into three subcategories in terms of format: handwritten letters, typed letters, application forms.

Male Applicants vs. Female Applicants

While there are patterns that can be extracted from these NRA application materials regarding sex, the sample is not large enough to extend those patterns out to the application genre as a whole. There are general conclusions to draw about these particular records, and the central difference between men’s and women’s applications is the extensiveness of

information contained in the application. In general, the male applicants have already learned that references about character are valued highly, or at the very least they trust the knowledge of the prominent men from which they are seeking recommendation. Several of the men's letters have references from not only former employers, but from prominent business members and politicians. These references often attest to immeasurable qualities such as the "character" and "trustworthiness" of the applicant as much as if not more than the work or experience of the applicant⁴⁶ (see Figure 5.12 "I think one of the best evidences of his character and standing is that he is State Master Councilor for the Order of DeMolay in the State of Iowa.").

Just as the handbooks' lack of basic skill instruction for men made sense, so do these differences in application content. Men had a longer history in the office than women. Once you are within the environment, you learn the rules of that environment. Men know by participation in the business world, or by word of mouth, what is valued in the hiring process. Conversely, due to their relative lack of office enculturation, women were less familiar with the application process than men. This is reflected in the fact that, as a whole, the women's application letters lacked the adherence to protocol that men's did, particularly the women's letters that were written by hand. Women penned all but four of the handwritten letters. Only four of the sixteen application letters with references belong to women, as opposed to twelve of the men's. Women simply had less experience than men and it shows up in the preparation of the materials as well as their content. Even a cursory glance at an application form shows that most women did not have enough history to fill the white space.

⁴⁶ These same qualities are highlighted in the etiquette books, as explored in Chapter 4.

TERBACK
DISTRICT IOWA
AS F. CROCKER
SECRETARY

COMM
JUD

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

January 25, 1935

Mr. A. F. Cook
NRA Regional Director
788 Saunders-Kennedy Building
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear Sir:

I am writing you this letter in the interest of Mr. Norman J. Guster, formerly of Denison, Iowa, now of Omaha, Nebraska, who is making application for a position in your office.

For your information will say that I am well acquainted with Mr. Guster. I believe him to be one of the finest, cleanest and most capable young men that we have in the State of Iowa. I feel sure that he will make absolutely good in any position that he is capable of handling.

I think one of the best evidences of his character and standing is that he is State Master Councilor for the Order of DeMolay in the State of Iowa. As you probably know, this is a fraternal order for sons of Masons and their chums from 15 to 21 years of age sponsored by Masonic organizations. We have over fifty chapters in Iowa, and Mr. Guster is now what is known as their State Master Councilor or President. For almost ten years I have been the Member of the Grand Council, Order of DeMolay, representing the State of Iowa in their Grand Council, and as such I have direct supervision of the DeMolay work in Iowa.

I am pleased to recommend Mr. Guster for the appointment which he is seeking. He is not only reliable, trustworthy and efficient, but he is a good Democrat.

If there is any further information you desire respecting Norman, I will be pleased to furnish same on request.

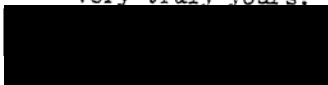
Very truly yours,


Figure 5.12. Letter of Recommendation for Norman Guster

Men's approaches to the job search were much more uniform than women's. Many of the men's application packets contained resumes as well as references. So not only does it appear women were less enculturated into the office system, it also seems they were faced with two related, possible predicaments: 1) They did not possess the experience and connections required to get recommendations and references and 2) It did not occur to them to even seek references or value recommendations. Either one is about the lack of integration into a progressing system. The content of the women's letters suggests that women believed that if you want something, all you can do is ask for it. The concept of qualification, matching skills, and leadership being the most desirable qualities in an employee was a specialized paradigm they were not yet privy to.

Analysis of these application materials cannot account for every word, mark, connection, or other characteristic of the personnel records. I do not, for example, remark at length on the fact that the records contain both Gwen Geech's application materials, and later, accounts of her in a managerial position. While that fact, as well as others, is worthy of further investigation, if possible, it is one of those details I have opted to leave out of my central exploration of the records in order to concentrate on other concepts. Therefore, in setting the scope of this section, I am not asserting that these documents reflect all office places at all times for all genders, only during the time-period of cultural crisis as characterized by the intersection of two cultural forces: the Depression-era NRA and the shifting office demographic.

Part IVa. Handwritten Letters of Application

Looking at the application materials the way I have ordered them, from most crude (the handwritten letter with personal life details) to the most advanced (John Kirlin's complete file) reveals an evolution that would be considered progress in light of Scientific Management. A handwritten letter may provide important facts about an applicant, but it requires close reading to gather the information necessary to compare the applicant with others. When employees are free to decide what information to provide a potential employer, the process is open-ended and the answers are vague. A process where applicants were forced to follow a strict process is more likely to lead to the best employee available for the job. The more "scientific" the steps, the more concrete the results and the more efficient the process.

Of the 58 letters of applications considered in this analysis, 44 are typed and 14 are written by hand. Of the 14 handwritten letters, ten are written by female applicants. Since the handwritten ones make up only one-third of the overall letters, and women wrote three-fourths of those, I believe women's handwritten letters represent the point furthest outside the office communication system; they are the least successful at matching office place expectations in terms of format, formality, and content.

Half of the handwritten letters written by women contain personal life details not found in traditional application genres, such as: "I need work so badly and now, this dreadful cold. I had a doctor this morning and he says I must stay in my room for at least one day longer.

...The only real way I can show my appreciation will be in my work" (see Figures 5.13 and

5.14), “I am in excellent health” and “I must see my young brother graduate high school.”

Some of the handwritten letters are written on slips of paper while others were written on full pieces of paper. There are some formal conventions being adhered to like using formal greetings and closings (“Dear Sir” and “Very Truly Yours” or “Very Sincerely”) and putting the recipient’s address at the top of the letter (although Agnes Sterner addresses her letter to simply “Mr Cook, City” Figures 5.13 and 5.14). On a basic visual level, the margins are fairly even, and the space between lines of text is equal (see Figures 5.15 through 5.19). Marianne Core’s letter (Figures 5.15 and 5.16) replicates standard business format most closely. She not only has a complete recipient address (“Mr. Cook c/o N.R.A.”) but includes her own home address at the end of the letter.

As a whole, the handwritten letters are weaker reproductions of a traditional business letter genre, but that did not prevent the authors from offering standard application content. The letters of Marianne Core, Thelma Rabers, Eileen Hall, and Unknown Author (Figures 5.15 through 5.19) all contain “resume” information such as prior relevant experience and reference information. Unknown Author employs the most professional vocabulary in her letter, referring to “serving in the capacity” and “Upon inquiring at your office” (Figure 5.17), which contrasts with Thelma Rabers’ statement that she has met “practically every class of people” (Figure 5.19). These seemingly small details are important because they serve as measurement of how far or close the authors of these letters are to mimicking ideal business correspondence even though they have written their letters of application by hand. Their content may be more advanced in terms of convention, but the fact that the letters are handwritten most likely negates that strength.

Part IVb. Typed Letters of Application

To move from handwritten to typed letters of application is to see the typed letters as more advanced on a spectrum of acceptable business communication format, but not necessarily content. The fact that they are typed, however, makes a marked difference in how closely these letters can be said to resemble a traditional genre of application. I assume that typing a letter would have required at least some extra effort. In magazines of this time such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Life*, there were advertisements introducing the typewriter to “bosses” and their secretaries. Some of the ads were about advanced typewriters (e.g. easier buttons to press, faster speed) but overall the ads were basic enough that it is clear typewriters were a technology for offices to consider getting—not a technology that was assumed to be present absolutely everywhere yet. Because of this, I do not think gaining access to a typewriter would have been easy for middle-class applicants at this time.

Information included in the typed letters of application is similar to that included in the handwritten letters of application. In Figure 5.20, Emily Bren is short and to the point. In only eight lines she establishes what she wants (stenographic position), her education (graduated Technical High School), her age (20), her typing speed (50 words per minute), and her dictation speed.

Emily Bren wastes no effort in her letter. She misspells the word manner as “menner.” She does, however, include the detail that her parents are “steady and loyal democrats” in an apparent homage to the party foundations of the National Recovery Administration.

(210)

Omaha Nebraska
Wednesday - 16th

Mr Cook
City
Dear Sir:

The old saying "Trouble never comes alone," seems to be running true to form with me. I need work so badly and now, this dreadful cold. I had a doctor this morning and he says I must stay in my room for at least one day longer, which more than likely means I won't be able to try out in your office until Monday. I do need work and want you to know I sincerely appreciate the offer

Figure 5.13. Handwritten Letter of Application with personal life details

ended me. The only real
way I can show my appreciation
will be in my work. if
given a position, and that,
Mr Cook, I promise you
I will do.

Very Truly yours




Figure 5.14. Handwritten Letter of Application with personal life details, page 2

January, 12, 1935

Mr. Cook,
70 N. P. A.,
788-796 Saunders-Kennedy Bldg.,
18th + Douglas Sts.,
Omaha, Neb.

Dear Sir,

I would appreciate an inter-
view with you in regards to obtaining
a position in your office as a
typist, file girl or ditto
machine operator.

I am 22 years of age and
high school graduate.

I have had four and one half
years experience as a typist,
file girl and ditto operator.
My rate of speed as a typist
is sixty words per minute.

I have worked for the
Broadstreet Company and the
Mutual Benefit Health and
Accident Assn. and can furnish
the best of references.

Please consider me as an

Figure 5.15. Handwritten Letter of Application as resume

-2-

licat for an interview as
 convenience.
 Mr. Joe Fernald of the
 level Bldg. referred me to
 you.
 Yours truly,
 [Redacted]
 1103 Park Ave.
 No. 5177.

Figure 5.16. Handwritten letter of Application as resume

3151 Duwapa
Omaha, Nebr
April 18, 1930

Miss Gwen Beach
N. O. A. Offices
Brandis Theatre Bldg.
Omaha, Nebraska.

Dear Miss Beach:

Upon inquiring at your office the other day I was requested to write you setting forth some of my past experience and references so as to be considered for a position there.

I am a graduate of Quak High School, Quak, Wyoming and of Barnes Commercial College Denver, Colorado.

My first position was secretary to Senator John F. Harkin at Quak, Wyoming. The reason for the termination of my employment with him was his serious illness. I then was elected to serve in the capacity Mr. Harkin had served as secretary - Treasurer of the Hopeville National Farm Loan Association. This position required an office of my own

Figure 5.17. Handwritten letter of application

North Platte, Nebras.
February 20, 1935

National Recovery Administration,
Regional Office
Omaha, Nebraska.

Attn: Mr. Cook.

Dear Sir:

I hereby apply for a
position as typist or filing
clerk and I am enclosing a
letter of recommendation from
the Hon. Edward P. Burke, U.S.

Very sincerely,

422 South Chestnut,
North Platte, Nebraska.

Figure 5.18 Handwritten letter of application

3106 Dodge Street
Omaha, Nebraska
January 15, 1934

Mr. Cook
Director of N. R. A.
Saunders - Kennedy Bldg
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear Sir:

Since you have given me instructions to write you a letter of application, I am at this time complying with your wishes.

You have on file the letters furnished me by Mr. Fred G. Stansby and Mr. Williamson of your organization.

I am 19 years of age, a graduate of St. John's High School and I have also attended Bayley's Business College to review shorthand and typing. I have had quite a varied experience, for I have traveled some 25 states, meeting practically every class of people. I have held several temporary positions, the latest of which was for the Democratic Central Committee. I am prepared also for filing and general office work.

My speed in typing is 80 words per minute and shorthand also 80 words per minute. I feel capable of handling a position requiring speed, accuracy, trust and capability. I am badly in need of work and all I ask for is a chance to prove my abilities.

Sincerely,

3106 Dodge Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Figure 5.19. Handwritten letter of application

She also provides education, typing and dictation speeds, and age, but she has experience as a stenographer to offer, and Reva Malashock has a list of references. Goldie Wolfson (Figure 5.22) offers personal life details such as the fact that she is “21 and unmarried” and “cannot expect [her] parents to support [her] at this time.” Wolfson also reveals that “With [her] father often ill, and a family of seven to care for, I am in dire need of work.” Her letter contains past work experience as well as references. I do not know why Goldie feels compelled to tell her readers she is unmarried. I would assume a woman might reveal this to paint herself as unencumbered by family obligations and therefore more dedicated to her job. In Goldie’s case, though, she so quickly undoes this by admitting to a family of seven to take care of that I cannot imagine that being her motivation.

Marie Lastovica’s letter, also very complete in its information, contains personal life details. “Late last spring I had pleuro-pneumonia, and Storz’s did not leave my position open for me. Since September, I have been doing temporary work and at this time am out of employment.” Maria has two layers of need. She lost her job due to illness and she has an “invalid mother.” I believe she shares this information to assure her readers that she has had to move from position to position because of health problems not because of work performance problems. She also implies Storz should have left her position open. Two of these women mention the Technical School as well as F.E.R.A. classes.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ F.E.R.A. stands for Federal Emergency Relief Act. FERA had three primary objectives: 1) Adequacy of relief measures; 2) Providing work for employable people on the relief rolls; and 3) Diversification of relief programs. “During 1932 and 1933 a growing number of unemployed teachers applied for relief after their resources had become exhausted. Shortly after the FERA was initiated we attempted to do something for this group of needy teachers. Obviously it was hardly enough to give them direct relief. With thousands of teachers out of work there were, at the same time, hundreds of thousands of men and women in need of educational

D
121/01

Bren

316 - Woolworth Ave

Omaha, Nebr. 1/15/35.

Mr. A.P.Cook,
788 Saunders K. Bldg.
Omaha, Nebr.


Dear Sir:

Making application for stenographic position
with your department:

I am 20 years of age, graduated
from Technical High School here, have machine speed of
fifty words per minute and dictation speed of one hun-
dred. Am confident of handling any work you may have
in a manner satisfactory to you.

My parents are steady and loyal democrats.

Yours sincerely,


Phone AT-7784

left ^{time} meet give trial -

Figure 5.20. Emily Bren Typed Letter of Application

facilities. We decided to put these unemployed teachers to work teaching those unemployed who wanted instruction."(Hopkins 113)

January 12, 1935

Regional N.R.A. Office
788-790 Saunders Kennedy Bldg.
Omaha, Nebraska

ATTENTION MISS GEACH:

Dear Miss Geach:

I am a young lady, twenty years of age and a graduate of Technical High School. While attending school, I majored in typing and shorthand and also took up filing and general office training. I am capable of taking dictation at one hundred and fifteen words per minute and can type from sixty-five to seventy words per minute.

I have had two and a half years experience as a stenographer. I was an employee of the Omaha Association of Credit Men and have also had considerable experience doing temporary work. I have had a great deal of practice typing law briefs for several Creighton Law students.

I submit the following references for your approval:
Mr. C. J. Wilson, Attorney for the Omaha Association of Credit Men, 200 Sunderland Building, Omaha, Nebraska.
Mr. J. J. Friedman, Attorney, 740 First National Bank Building, Omaha, Nebraska
Mr. Francis P. Matthews, Attorney, 200 Insurance Building, Omaha, Nebraska
I have reference letters from the above men and would be willing to submit them at your request.

I would appreciate an opportunity to prove my capabilities as a stenographer to you. My phone number is Harney 6437.

Miss Reva Malashock
3106 Myrtle Avenue
Omaha, Nebraska

Figure 5.21. Reva Malashock typed letter of application

29

Wolfson
No4426 South 25th Street,
Omaha, Nebraska.
January 11, 1935.

Mr. Cook,
788 Brandeis Theatre Bldg.,
Omaha, Nebraska.

Dear Mr. Cook:

I wish to apply for a position as stenographer in the new government offices opening soon.

I am twenty-one years old and unmarried.

My education consists of a four-year Stenography course in South High School, from which I graduated in 1930. Recently I attended the FEBA commercial classes for several months, where I reviewed shorthand, bookkeeping, and type-writing.

My type speed is 65 words per minute, and I can take dictation at 100 words per minute.

* Offices where I have recently held positions and from whom references may also be had are:
Martin's Meat Company, 24th & "O" St., Ma. 1590.
People's Bargain Store, 2524 "Q" St., Ma. 1018.
Pyroil Sales Company, 50th & Center St., Wa. 7580.

Further references may be had from Mr. H. Dworsky,
% Allen Furniture Company, Ma. 2370; and from Mr. J. P. Batt,
% American Upholstering Company, At. 6926.

As I am of age, I cannot expect my parents to support me at this time. With my father often ill, and a family of seven to care for, I am in dire need of work.

If it is possible, an interview with you would be greatly appreciated.

████████████████████
4426 So. 25th St.,
Ma. 2061

Figure 5.22 Typed Letter of Application by Goldie Wolfson

Management's evaluation of potential employees was a process undergoing analysis for its effectiveness. As I pointed out earlier, there is not room for employee authorized marginalia on the application forms. Similarly there appears to be no existing form for commenting on employee interviews. That means the assessment is left to marginalia. Some of the comments are definitely helpful—"will come on trial." Some comments, though, should be irrelevant, and while they were not so then, are illegal now in the interview process.

Part IVc. Application Forms

An application form serves to make official the information needed from a potential employee. The required information, in fact, becomes codified by way of application forms. Once a request is typed on company letterhead and is followed by blank lines and spaces the need becomes legitimate. An applicant is no longer able to decide whether to provide certain information if he or she wants to appear to be participating fully in the application process. In the collection of NRA personnel documents available to me, there are several versions of the NRA application form:

- One-page "Personal History Statement" (Figure 5.23)
- One-page "National Recovery Administration" (Figure 5.24)
- One-page "NRA Personnel Section" (Figure 5.25)
- Application packet that begins with NRA "Application for Employment" form (Figures 5.26 through 5.29)

I do not have enough information to put these forms on a time line, but their variances in format indicate that the office has yet to designate one form for job applications. Perhaps

some of the forms originated in another regional office, and there is no consistency in application across offices. The first three versions of the application form all solicit the same information. Forms in this lengthy application packet put categories of assessment on the record, although I do not know if this was indeed later than the handwritten letters. By putting job criteria in print, a textual reality and weight is given to them. If these categories are on the application, they must be important. Workers were partly constructed by the lines (i.e. boundaries) on these application forms. Women, as well as men, came to the NRA with all their differences and messy individualities, but presumably the forms they filled out, as well as the etiquette handbooks, began to trim those differences, shaping them into the ideal workers.

Among the application materials there is only one packet that resembles contemporary materials at all. John Kirlin's materials contain not only a detailed letter explaining his prior experiences, but also a sheet of paper detailing his business experience, references, and education formatted like a contemporary resume. Included in his application materials are also two reference letters from current managers (Figures 5.30 through 5.34). Kirlin's packet of materials could represent a "control" with which other application materials would be compared. His "resume" represents an ideal document for genre calibration

The most direct textual surveillance a company can employ is the human resource record, by documenting several aspects of an employee's existence. Therefore, one substantial evolution in the personnel records was the forms an employee was required to complete in order to either apply for employment or be a recognized employee.

FORM No. 6
of the President 3/28/24
and Dec. 5, 1929

PERSONAL HISTORY STATEMENT
(To be prepared by appointee in own handwriting)

Department or Establishment NRA - Region #7 Date 1-8-35

1. Name in full (Mr., Miss, or Mrs.) Johnson, Thelma Walbr
(Surname) (Given name) (Middle name)

2. Present address 406 Valley Omaha, Nebraska
(Number) (Street) (City) (State)

3. Legal (voting) residence Nebraska Douglas Omaha
(State and Congressional District) (County) (City or town)

4. Where born Nebraska Omaha When born 8-7-1911
(State or foreign country) (City or town) (Month Day)

5. If foreign-born, state whether naturalized or alien

6. Indicate sex, marital condition, and race by check, thus: If Mrs., state other names under which previously employed

SEX		MARITAL CONDITION				RACE. (If other, state which)	
Male	Female <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Married	Divorced	Widowed	White <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Colored

7. Number and ages of dependents domiciled with you Brother, aged 14 years Mother, aged 45 y

8. A complete record of your past service for the United States Government other than military or naval:

BRANCH OF SERVICE	PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION	SALARY	DATE APPOINTED			DATE SEPARATED	
				Month	Day	Year	Month	Day

9. Are any members of your family, who are domiciled with you, in the U. S. Government service? If so, state below: No.

NAME	POSITION AND DEPARTMENT OR OFFICE IN WHICH EMPLOYED	RELATIONSHIP
	Position Department or office	
	Position Department or office	
	Position Department or office	

10. Do you now hold any State or municipal office? If so, state below: No.

(Title) (Location) (Date appointment expires)

11. Are you the wife of a disabled veteran or widow or orphan of a person who was in the military or naval service? No.

(Wife, widow, or orphan) (Name of veteran) (Organization and last year of service)

12. Military and naval record. If any, check (✓) to indicate branch and other information, and give dates of enlistment and discharge.

None	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Coast Guard	War veteran	Pensioner	Veterans' Bureau beneficiary

Enlisted Discharged Enlisted Discharged

Rank Rank Rank Rank

Organization Organization Organization Organization

[OVER] 10-1929

Figure 5.23. "Personal History Statement"



(132)

NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION

ANSON, Thelma W. NRA - Region #7
 (LAST NAME) (FIRST NAME) (MIDDLE INITIAL) (DEPARTMENT OR UNIT)
 OCCUPATION **Stenographer** DATE OF APPOINTMENT **1-8-1935** ANNUAL SALARY **\$1260.00**

RESIDENTIAL HOME ADDRESS **406 Valley Street, Omaha** PHONE **At. 9058** STATE OF LEGAL RESIDENCE **Nebraska**

EDUCATION— STATE NUMBER OF YEARS	GRADE SCHOOL 8	BUSINESS SCHOOL 1	AGE 23 SINGLE
	HIGH SCHOOL 4	CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL	
	COLLEGE	FINISHING SCHOOL	

APPOINTED AT REQUEST OF OR ENDORSED BY _____

LAST GOVERNMENT SERVICE **None**

DEPARTMENT	POSITION	DATE RELEASED	ANNUAL SALARY
LAST POSITION OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT SERVICE			
COMPANY Schulze Baking Company		DATE RELEASED 5-19-34	ANNUAL SALARY \$700.

IS YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE _____ IF SO, WHERE EMPLOYED _____ IF SO, WHAT IS THEIR ANNUAL SALARY _____

DESCRIBE DUTIES NOW BEING PERFORMED: **stenographic**

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1935 16-1184

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

9. Are any members of your family, who are domiciled with you, in the U. S. Government service? If so, state below: **No.**

NAME	POSITION AND DEPARTMENT OR OFFICE IN WHICH EMPLOYED	RELATIONSHIP
	Position Department or office	
	Position Department or office	
	Position Department or office	

10. Do you now hold any State or municipal office? If so, state below: **No.**

(Title) (Location) (Date appointment expires)

11. Are you the wife of a disabled veteran or widow or orphan of a person who was in the military or naval service? **No.**

(Wife, widow, or orphan) (Name of veteran) (Organization and last year of service)

12. Military and naval record. If any, check (✓) to indicate branch and other information, and give dates of enlistment and discharge.

None	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Coast Guard	War veteran	Pensioner	Veterans' Bur beneficiary
Enlisted _____	Discharged _____	Enlisted _____	Discharged _____	Rank _____	Rank _____	Organization _____	Organization _____

address: 406 Valley Street Omaha

Figure 5.24. "National Recovery Administration"



NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION

PERSONNEL SECTION

NAME: _____ Date _____
 (First Name) (Middle Name) (Last Name)

WASHINGTON RESIDENCE - Street: _____ AGE: _____
 City: _____ Telephone: _____
 State: _____ Single: _____

LEGAL RESIDENCE - Street: _____ Married: _____
 City: _____
 State: _____ Dependents: _____
 When Last There: _____ Race: _____

Are you in good health: _____

EDUCATION: (Give number of years opposite each and name of college)

Elementary School: _____
 High School: _____
 College: _____
 Degrees: _____
 Business School: _____

<u>EXPERIENCE:</u>	POSITION OR TITLE	WHERE EMPLOYED	DATES	SALARY

STATE PRESENT BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS:	WHOM TO NOTIFY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:
Firm Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Relation: _____
Position: _____	Address: _____
Salary or Compensation: _____	Telephone: _____

Figure 5.25. "National Recovery Administration Personnel Section."

126

Form 400
(For office use only)

Eligible For:

NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Photograph
Here

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

A. PERSONAL DATE May 14, 193⁵

1. Name GEACE Gwen
(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Initial)

2. Present Address 788 Saunders-Kennedy Building, Omaha, Nebr. Phone At 2131

3. Legal (voting) Address District of Columbia; 1800 K St. NW, Washington, D.C.

4. Date of birth March 17, 1895. Place of birth England

5. Height 5'7" Weight 155 Color of hair Brown Color of eyes Brown

6. Complexion Light Sex Female Color White

7. State if single, married or widowed Single No. of Children -- Their ages --

8. How many beside yourself, are entirely dependent upon you for support? None
How many partially dependent? --

9. In case of emergency, notify --
Address -- Phone --

10. Have you ever applied for a bond? No Accepted or rejected? --
State the name of the Bonding Company --

11. Have you ever been involved in any court proceedings? No.
If so, furnish particulars --

12. What is the state of your health at the present time? Excellent

B. EMPLOYMENT

13. Have you previously applied for a Federal Government position? Now employed by
If so, when, where, and to whom? ERA

14. If working now, why do you wish to change? Not unless present work is discontinued

15. What kind of position or work do you desire? Same as I now hold.

16. Will you accept temporary employment? No.

17. What location do you prefer? Washington, D.C. or East Are you willing to travel? Yes.

18. State lowest salary acceptable \$4,500 When can you report? Reasonable Length of Notice

Figure 5.26. Page one of application packet

NRA APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

-2-

NAME GEACH, Gwen

C. GOVERNMENTAL

19. Are you a citizen of the United States? Yes.

If at any time you were not a citizen of the United States, give the following information:

Date of naturalization June 20, 1923.

Place Appleton, Wisconsin. Court Outagamie County

20. If you are now in Federal employ, fill in the items hereunder:

- (a) Title Field Representative, NRA Compliance Division.
- (b) Grade and salary Grade 14; \$4,500 (c) Department NRA
- (d) Bureau or Division Compliance Division
- (e) Name and title of superior A.F. Cook, Regional Director, Region VII.
- (f) Principal duties Supervising of work of eight State Offices in Region VII

21. If you have any relatives, including husband or wife, in the Federal or District of Columbia service, furnish the following information: No.

Name and Address	Department	Relationship
- - -	- -	- - -
- - -	- -	- - -

22. Have you ever taken any Civil Service examination? Yes If so, give titles and dates of examinations and grades received Associate Industrial Economist; June 22, 1934; Grade 72.10

23. Have you ever served in the U. S. military or naval service? No.

If so, which branch? - - Organization? - -

Rank? - - Date of Enlistment? - - Have you been discharged? - -

Give date of discharge - - Was discharge honorable? - -

Have you ever served in the military or naval forces of a foreign nation? No. If so, state nation and branch of service - -

24. Are you the wife of a disabled veteran, or widow, or orphan of a person who was in the military or naval service? No.

Give name of veteran - - State relationship - -

State organization of veteran - -

Veteran's last year of service - -

25. Do you receive an annuity under the Civil Service Retirement Act? No.

Figure 5.27. Page two of application

NAME GEACH, Gwen

27. State, in order, your employment record for the last five years or more. Include periods of unemployment. Account for all time from the first date mentioned.

From Mo. Yr.	To Mo. Yr.	Employer	Address	Position	Reason discharged	Last Salary Paid off
Jun 24	Jun 28	Wisconsin Industrial Commission	Madison, Wis.	Women's Commission, Dept.	Resigned	\$1,920 &
" 28	" 29	Natl Child Labor Commission	N.Y.	Field Rep.	"	2,400 &
" 29	Jul 34	Natl League Women Voters		Congressional Secy	"	2,800 &
Jul 34	Date	NRA		Field Rep.	Present	4,500 &

28. Give as references, the names of more business, professional or similar persons, not relatives or former employers, who have known you at least two years.

Name	Occupation	Number of years individual has known you.
Miss Alice L. Edwards	1800 K St. NW. Washington D.C. Ex.Secy Amer Home Econ.Assoc.	6 years
Miss Elizabeth Eastman	2224 Cathedral Ave., Washington, D.C. Philanthropist	6 years.
W.E. Kitch	Bloomer, Wisconsin. Banker	12 years.
A. J. Altmeyer	Dept of Labor, Wash. Assist.Secy of Labor.	12 years
Oscar L. Chapman	" " Interior, ". " " " Interior	3 years

29. Membership in any fraternal organization _____

30. Do you have the privilege of writing to your former employer _____
Yes.

Figure 5.28. Page three of application packet



Kirlin (57)

NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

April 10, 1935

IN REPLY REFER TO _____

Mr. A. F. Cook, Regional Director
Saunders-Kennedy Building
203 South 18th Street
Omaha, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Cook:

Re: Confirmation of conversation of
March 4, 1935.

My service with the N.R.A. dates from July 27, 1933. From that date until March 15, 1934, I was connected with the Correspondence Division. The nature of my work is outlined in the second attachment hereto.

From March 15th to June 1st, I was an Examiner for the Review Division. The work consisted of reviewing each Administrative Order, prior to its approval, for policy, form, and documentary sufficiency.

On June 1, 1934, at the request of Barton W. Murray, who was on that date appointed Division Administrator, I was transferred to the Equipment Division to coordinate Administrative functions. The primary purpose of this was to establish throughout the Division a uniformity of policy and procedure.

After the completion of that task, I was appointed Code Assistant for the Equipment Division, September 5, 1934, succeeding Evon A. Ford, who was transferred to Mississippi as State N.R.A. Compliance Director.

Briefly, the Code Assistant is responsible for the supervision of the personnel of that office and the proper performance of the following functions:

1. Complete and up-to-date information on all Codes assigned to the Division.

Figure 5.30 First page of John Kirlin's application materials

- 2 -

2. Codes abstracted for all provisions requiring Administrative action.
3. Codes, amendments, stays, interpretations, exemptions, budgets, by-laws, trade practice and labor complaints plans, and other Orders of whatsoever nature, reviewed for policy, legality, form and factual sufficiency.
4. Notify all interested persons of the substance of rulings on the above.
5. Maintain permanent records and files on all matters pertinent to the functions of the Division.

In this connection it is interesting to note that for the period of September 1, 1934 to March 31, 1935, twenty-four hundred and eight (2,408) Administrative Orders were put through to approval by the Equipment Division. Included in this number were 101 Codes, 136 Amendments, 306 Exemptions, 167 Classifications and 71 Interpretations.

The possibility of reviewing such a large number of Administrative Documents without obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the M.R.A. is extremely negligible. This, coupled with a thorough understanding of conditions in the Mid-West, gained through having been raised, educated and in business for five years in that section of the country, appears to well qualify me for a position in your organization.

In addition to having a large circle of business contacts in the Mid-West, the fact that Mrs. Kerlin's family, as well as my own, reside in Iowa, leads me to seek a transfer to that section of the country.

Since talking with you I have been advised that my name has been submitted for reclassification to Grade 12. If approved by the Administration, it would be effective May 1, 1935.

Your favorable consideration of my candidacy will be greatly appreciated.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

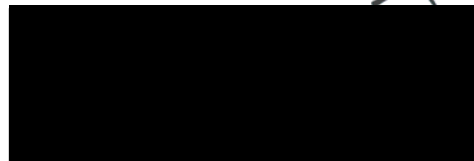


Figure 5.31. Page two of John Kirlin's application materials

NAME: J. Don Kerlin
 ADDRESS: 3121 Sixteenth Street, N. W.
 PHONE: Columbia 10068
 AGE: 29 DATE OF BIRTH: September 30, 1906
 GRADE: Eleven MARRIED: Yes

BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

<u>Year</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Nature of Duties</u>
1924 - 1927	Leacox & Redfield Drug Company	Pharmacist
1928 - 1931	Coppock & Kerlin Wholesale Oil & Implement Company	Half-interest. Secretary-Treas.
1932- 1933	Congressman Otha D. Wearin	Secretary

REFERENCES

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
Senator Louis Murphy, Iowa	Senate Office Bldg.
Senator Edward Burke, Nebraska	Senate Office Bldg.
Representative E. C. Eicher, Iowa	
Representative E. M. Jacobsen, Iowa	
Representative Guy Gillette, Iowa	
Representative Otha D. Wearin, Iowa	
Governor Clyde L. Herring	Des Moines, Iowa
Earl Fishbaugh, President, Security Bank	Shenandoah, Iowa
Fred Schneider, Pres., Shenandoah Nat. Bank	Shenandoah, Iowa
Earl E. May, President, K. M. A.	Shenandoah, Iowa

(All References with permission)

EDUCATION

High School - Shenandoah, Iowa
 Iowa University - Iowa City, Iowa
 Joined N. R. A. - July 27, 1933.

Figure 5.32. Page three of John Kirlin's application materials

Committees:
Flood Control
Public Lands
Public Buildings and Grounds

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

March 22, 1935

Mr. Lawrence J. Martin
National Recovery Administration
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Martin:

I am very much interested in Mr. J. Donald Kerlin of Shenandoah, Iowa, who was formerly my secretary. He came to me from a business of his own that he had been operating for some five or six years. His position in the community was unusually good as he had been active in the commercial club, the Kiwanis, and various other community enterprises. His interest in and congenial attitude toward all of his work facilitates his successful handling of it.

Mr. Kerlin, as you know, has been a Code Assistant for Division Two for some time and thereby has gained a broad outlook upon the affairs of that particular department of the Government. It is my understanding that he has been unusually successful in this line and has made a substantial contribution to the program of the New Deal in that manner.

It is my understanding that Mr. Kerlin is being considered for Executive Assistant at Omaha, Nebraska, and I think wisely so because of his executive ability, business judgment, and mid-western contacts, where he has spent the most of his life. These qualifications, coupled with his extensive experience in Washington, should make him an excellent man for the position.

Naturally, I would be grateful for any consideration you can give Mr. Kerlin and his appointment to such a position would meet with my unqualified approval.

Very sincerely,

(Signed)
OTHA D. WEARIN

ODW:h

5.33. Page four of John Kirlin's application materials

March 5, 1934

MEMORANDUM

From: A. R. Forbush
To: Fayson Irwin
In re: Don Kerlin

I understand that you interviewed Don Kerlin of my department for possible appointment as an Aide, and I want to take this opportunity of telling you that I think he is very good material.

Kerlin has been in the Correspondence Department since early last summer, and has been one of my best and most consistent dictators. He has specialized in handling the mail referred from the White House, work which requires a great deal of tact and a rather wide knowledge of human nature. He has done a very good job, and has been especially good in soothing the feelings of people who write in bitter criticisms of the Administration and its activities.

Kerlin has a very pleasant personality and is a great favorite with everyone down here who knows him. He meets people well and makes a very good impression on everyone with whom he comes in contact.

Before he came in here, Kerlin was for some time Secretary to a Congressman, and the training he got in this position should be helpful to him in work as an Aide. I do not think you would make any mistake in appointing Kerlin as an Aide, and I heartily endorse him for such a job.

A. R. Forbush,
Deputy Administrator,
Correspondence Division.




Figure 5.34. Page six of John Kirlin's application materials

Local revisions in the format and content of the forms were made. Each question is allotted a certain amount of space for reply in the form of written words or a series of boxes to check and uncheck. This gives every form its own value system dictating what matters and what does not. Many of the women's personal "notes of application" include details of the applicant's family life: "With my father often ill" (Figure 5.22) and "I am a widow, aged thirty-two, and I have two small daughters to care for (see Figure 5.8). The standardized application form, of course, does not contain a section for such information, so unless an applicant wants to risk discipline by putting her personal information in the margins of the form, or in the corner of the form, there is no place for it, literally and figuratively. The forms fit a limited number of characters and construct genres that ask certain questions and ignore others, thereby valuing certain types of information and devaluing other types (see Figure 5.23).

To Be Seen or Not To Be Seen

Chapter Four discussed the fact that the gender narratives for women often evoked invisibility, using words such as conceal, cover, and hide; men, however, are expected to "stand out from the crowd," "show off their individuality," and simply, "be seen." Do these paradigms operate the same in applying for a job? Does a woman want to be invisible in the application process? Should a man strive to stress his individuality in applying for a job? These questions appear to present yet another paradox in successful gendered behavior in the business world. On the one hand, the more an applicant adheres to conventions, the less likely she or he is to stick out from the rest of the applicants. If they do not violate expectations, then their materials will look similar to all of the others in the pile. In this case,

invisibility could be read as a positive trait. Invisibility is the result of doing the right thing. It could be interpreted as conformity of the positive kind where one is able to demonstrate his or her seamless enculturation into a specialized context.

On the other hand, could this conformity hurt their cause in the case of an application? For women, the answer might be yes. It is entirely possible that although personal life details are not part of the traditional application genre they are influential to a hiring manager—especially a male one. By including personal life details, then, a female applicant’s visibility could be increased in a positive way. This visibility might be increased by pity, but if that results in a well-paying job that may not matter. There is no way of knowing this without being able to have access to readers’ reaction to application letters with personal life details, but it is possible that since women were less likely to be enculturated into office conventions, they were not expected to be enculturated, and therefore readers employed a different set of criteria.

For men, though, establishing visibility and individuality might be a detriment, because it could be the result of violating an established convention that the reader expects an applicant to understand. The goal for men in this situation might actually be invisibility, achieved by demonstrating a strict and rather banal adherence to protocol. In order to stand out as someone to hire one must actually fit in with the rest of the pile. Presumably, one of the last things a hiring manager wants to read from a male applicant is a letter containing personal life details concerning his trials and tribulations. Personal life details might evoke pity for female applicants—particularly from a male reader—because of a societal narrative that says

men are the protectors of women. Coming from a man, these same personal life details might result in a lack of confidence on the part of the hiring manager, if not outright derision for the male applicant who cannot suffer his setbacks in silence. At the very least, the image of the struggling man does not fit into the male narrative on display in the business etiquette handbooks. In the estimation of the authors of those books, men should be fighting sabertooth tigers, not begging other men for jobs. Men do not fight for recognition in the vast cosmos just to get a job from another man's pity.

PART V. JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRES

In the National Recovery Administration offices, the Job Description Questionnaire was used to conduct time studies and clarify job titles and duties. The Job Questionnaire is a cohesive, coherent genre within these records. There is a prescribed NRA-authored form intended to be used for the "recurrent situation" (Miller 151) in which employees self-monitor their time spent on the job. It appears as though at least some employees were required to fill out Job Description Questionnaires regularly⁴⁸, and because of this their "application [became] routine" (Miller 157). Section V looks at the rhetorical work of this genre.

Each Job Description Questionnaire contains explicit instructions for the main portion of the form:

TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that require

⁴⁸ It is impossible to say how often employees were required to complete a Job Questionnaire, because I do not know whether some employees were not required to fill them out or if they filled them out and they are missing. Since some employees have more than one completed Job Description Questionnaire, I am assuming employees had to fill them out regularly.

most of your time. Explain occasional duties last. In the column at the left opposite each paragraph enter the approximate percentage of your time devoted to the work described in the paragraph. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS ON FORM 410 (see Figures 5.37, 5.38, 5.39 and 5.42)

Beneath that section employees are asked how long their duties have been "substantially as described above." Then, as part of the calibration process I have discussed, employees are asked to name other employees "whose duties are substantially the same as yours." By asking these questions management seeks to strictly codify employee titles and job descriptions. Once these job titles are codified their mobility as a textual entity is increased.

Because the number of middle managers increased markedly during the 1930s, the distance between workers and management increased as well, and Latour believes "inscriptions allow influence at a distance" (Ritzer 2). The forms gain new meaning when they record the specifics of the employee. Textual surveillance made that distance not only irrelevant because employers still knew everything they needed to know about employees, but it actually made it advantageous. People and processes are much easier to simplify when you see them broadly instead of individually. Lola's productivity in the Accounting Department may decline because she is in the middle of a custody fight, but only the co-workers who sit next to her know that. The divisions between the levels of employees are far enough—both literally and figuratively—that Lola's personal trials are unlikely to make their way up the chain of command.

This same chain of command does not recognize small, incidental tasks performed in the office if they are not recorded on the Job Description Questionnaire form. In this case a job becomes one of Latour's frozen representations. The job is defined by the form, and this job stays the same in the eyes of management no matter what happens on a daily basis in the office. Efficiency in management is increased this way. No extra effort is wasted on tailoring the job to the person, or morphing the workplace around its personnel. When an office place completes the process of defining a stenographer, then that's what a stenographer is; that job position is specifically drawn. If one works as a stenographer, one necessarily has the skills of a stenographer; these skills are not automatically transferable to another concretely defined job position. A stenographer who picks up slack in the typing room, delivers coffee to bosses, unpacks newly delivered office supplies, or files when someone is gone, for example, is still only a stenographer. Any skills or tasks not under the job description of a stenographer are invisible to management.

Because of frozen representations, or immutable mobiles, an outsider who became a new manager, for example, needed only to pull out the files to know his staff: Janice is a stenographer, Judy is a typist, Steven is responsible for all telegraphs. Whether these labels reflect the literal work of Janice, Judy, and Steven is irrelevant, as long as the textual report of their work is simple and one-dimensional. In the case of the NRA, a new manager would only need a Job Description Questionnaire (see Figure 5.35). This textual knowledge in hand, the manager can proceed with an assumed clarity. Any peripheral tasks mastered by Helen under the supervision of the old manager are lost. Any personal resonance Helen had with the old manager is erased unless the previous manager made some textual notation in Helen's

files. There is no form that asks Helen to list the tasks she completes that do not fall within the stenographer label. We are what we write; as such, it is important to see workplace narratives as producers of culture rather than merely products of culture. When Helen is classified as a stenographer she is understood to be capable of completing the job of a stenographer. Her talents are limited to her talents as a stenographer.

Although reducing employees to textual representations might seem disempowering, Latour posits just the opposite, claiming immutable mobiles can be used to “[R]everse the balance of forces between those who master and those who are mastered” (Latour 227). This is because the process can also be seen as a way for employees to be recognized solely on their workplace merits. After all, part of the standardization process is erasing difference in the representation. In terms of sex, race, and disabilities this could indeed reduce an employer’s agency in assessing potential applicants.

Employers had agency to prescribe explicit instructions for employees to fill out the Job Description Questionnaire. Despite these instructions, however, employees' answers to question #11 vary in both content and layout. On a May 18th, 1935 Job Description Questionnaire, Molly Dewey only breaks her duties down to two categories: statistical work at 70% and stenographic work at 30%. (see Figure 5.37). Her definition of this statistical work is very detailed, and it uses a good deal of National Recovery Administration specialized terminology (“Roberts Committee Surveys...Adjustment Boards...County Consumers’ Councils”). She offers the names of Lucille Smalley and Beverley Brown as women whose duties are very similar to hers.

Form 409

128

NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION

JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

May 22, 1938

- 1. Name Swack Gwen
(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Initial)
- 2. Title on last Form 201 Field Representative
- 3. Customary office title Field Representative
- 4. Grade 14 5. Salary \$ 6,500
- 6. Division Compliance 7. Section Field 8. Unit Omaha Regis Office, Reg.
- 9. Do you direct or supervise other employees? Yes.
- 9a. If so, in what way? Supervising the work of eight State Offices by checking on type of adjustment methods; procedure followed; also ability of the personnel in offices; reviewing complaints adjusted and those over six weeks old.
- 9b. If five or less, give names and titles:

- 10. Who is your immediate superior?
A.F. Cook Regional Director
(Name) (Title)
- 10a. In what way is your work directed, supervised, or reviewed?
Checked by Regional Director and Compliance Division in Washington.

EVERY QUESTION MUST BE FULLY AND ACCURATELY ANSWERED

(Fill out one original and one carbon)

X

Figure 5.35 Job Description Questionnaire

11.

IN FIELD:

(127)

I supervise the adjustment work of eight State Offices: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming by visiting each State Office at given intervals. On these occasions I interview the State Director and the Compliance Officers; also Field Adjusters and Docket Clerks.

I review adjusted complaints and unadjusted complaints and suggest ways of effecting a settlement, which sometimes means that I "sit in" on a Hearing or Conference between the interested parties in the case.

I carefully review all six-weeks-old complaints with the Compliance Officers and the Field Adjuster handling the case, in the event he is in town at the time of my visit. If there are any difficult situations in any of the Field Offices within the States, I visit them. I do not visit each Resident Field Adjuster on every trip, but I have visited all during the past year.

66 2/3%

While in the State, I call on Code Authorities and make a definite point to meet all Code Authorities who come into the State Offices while I am there.

Field Letters and other general communications are discussed in order to be sure that the State Office is acquainted with the latest orders and rulings from Washington.

Personnel problems are discussed - such as suggestions for removals or advancement, together with personal interviews with Employees who present special problems.

In short, I attempt to improve the methods of work in the State, passing on from one State to another any suggestions which have proved helpful and effective and by generally observing the functioning of the offices to see that the State performs the duties assigned to it.

- - - - -

IN REGIONAL OFFICE:

While in the Regional Office, I confer with the Regional Director regarding the various situations in the States and offer my recommendations.

33 1/3%

Each Monday, every State sends in a "Weekly Adjusters Report", which I check over in order to determine the amount and type of work each State is doing.

Every two weeks I also check the Bi-Weekly Reports, which are required by Washington to determine the trend of the activity in the States.

Figure 5.36. Job Description Questionnaire

On September 12th of that same year, though, Molly breaks her tasks down to percentages as small as 3% on her Job Description Questionnaire, and she does not offer anyone who has duties similar to hers (see Figure 5.38). Hazel Webber does not offer names to that effect either, and she also neglects to list actual percentage numbers. Hazel simply explains that "The files take a great deal of time" proving that even documents with narrow questions can produce vague answers (see Figure 5.39). Hazel Webber has two other documents that seek to break down her job requirements, but neither of them is in the requested official "Job Description Questionnaire" format. One document is an overcrowded, over-detailed account of her duties in near essay form (see Figure 5.40). The other is a document created completely by Hazel. It lists her stenography and docket work duties for one work week, broken down by the hours dedicated to each task (see Figure 5.41). Lola Craft completes her form correctly, breaking down her duties into 60% and 40% and revealing that Lucille Smalley and Molly Dewey have duties similar to hers (See Figure 5.42). According to Kwolek-Folland,

... Management theorists and educators surveyed employees to outline the discrete tasks of an entire day's work. From these findings they devised a standard (usually taken from the output of the most efficient worker) for the tasks involved in a particular job category, which became the norm for all other individuals in the same category, and set a minimum salary. (36)

After the standard was set for a worker, the next step was to measure each worker in relation to that norm, and bring workers up to the speed of that norm. This was done by evaluations conducted by the employer letting each employee know her/his success in relation to its co-workers. If a worker performed better than that standard, they could obtain bonuses. .

11. TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that require most of your time. Explain occasional duties last. In the column at the left opposite each paragraph enter the approximate percentage of your time devoted to the work described in that paragraph. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON FORM 410.

Percentage of working time	
70%	Statistical work relating to reports sent in by State Offices for Washington in connection with the Roberts Committee Surveys, State Office activities, space, equipment and service of State Offices, Adjustment Boards, State Advisory Boards and County Consumers' Councils.
30%	Stenographic work on office correspondence with Washington and State Offices.

12. How long have your duties been substantially as described above? 1 month

13. Do you know of any persons whose duties are substantially the same as yours? Yes. Name not more than three. _____

Beverley Brown, Lucille Smalley

I hereby certify that the foregoing was composed by me after reading Form 410 and that it is a true statement of my duties.

(Signature of Employee)

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the statements made on both sides of this sheet are accurate and complete.

September 12, 1935.

(Signature of Executive Assistant)
G. W. Kirtley, Acting Administrative Assistant

Figure 5.37. Task breakdown by percentage, Molly Dewey

11. TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that require most of your time. Explain occasional duties last. In the column at the left opposite each paragraph enter the approximate percentage of your time devoted to the work described in that paragraph. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON FORM 410.

Percentage of:
working time:

- .50 : Taking stenographic notes of minutes of Regional Compliance Council proceedings.
- .35 : Transcribing Regional Compliance Council minutes (in triplicate).
- .06 : Taking dictation from Chairman, Regional Compliance Council.
- .03 : Taking dictation from Industry and Labor Members of Regional Compliance Council.
- .03 : Filing letters.
- .03 : Filing and indexing Administrative Orders, Executive Orders, Office Memoranda, Office Orders and Instructions issued by the National Recovery Administration.

12. How long have your duties been substantially as described above? 2 months

13. Do you know of any persons whose duties are substantially the same as yours? No. Name not more than three. _____

I hereby certify that the foregoing was composed by me after reading Form 410 and that it is a true statement of my duties.

(Signature of Employee)

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the statements made on both sides of this sheet are accurate and complete.

May 18, 1935.

(Signature of Executive Assistant.)

Figure 5.38. Task breakdown by percentage, Molly Dewey

11. TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that require most of your time. Explain occasional duties last. In the column at the left opposite each paragraph enter the approximate percentage of your time devoted to the work described in that paragraph. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON FORM 410.

Percentage of working time

My work is secretarial, as I handle the correspondence and files of G. W. Kirtley, Acting Administrative Assistant.

The correspondence is varied in nature, dealing with various problems presented by the State Offices, as well as directions for handling the numerous reports and surveys.

The files take a great deal of time, as there are a large number of statistical reports coming in, which require immediate and careful filing. From these reports, various forms are compiled for Washington's information, as well as summaries for the benefit of the State Offices. These must all be made up and properly filed.

12. How long have your duties been substantially as described above? Since June 1
13. Do you know of any persons whose duties are substantially the same as yours? No. Name not more than three.

I hereby certify that the foregoing was composed by me after reading Form 410 and that it is a true statement of my duties.

[Redacted Signature]
(Signature of Employee)

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the statements made on both sides of this sheet are accurate and complete.

September 12, 1935

[Redacted Signature]
(Signature of Executive Assistant.)
G. W. Kirtley
Acting Administrative Assistant

133

Figure 5.39. Task percentage breakdown, Hazel Webber

(36)

11. TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that

ITEM 11

My duties are a combination of Docket Clerk, Stenographer and Information Desk work.

The docketing takes up the largest percentage of my time. When a case is accepted by the Regional Director from a State Office or Code Authority, it is turned over to me. I first arrange the papers in chronological order, taking out all duplicates. The original sheets are next fastened in a manila folder with an Acco fastener. This file is then given an docket number, preceded by the Region number, as "R7-3", and classed as a Permanent file. The duplicates are arranged in chronological order, fastened in a manila folder with an Acco fastener, and given the same docket number as the Permanent. This is called the Temporary file. This Temporary file is not to leave the office, and contains all inter-office correspondence pertaining to the file. When the case is jacketed, tab pasters are filled out, on the typewriter, giving the name and address of the respondent, control, or docket, number, code violated, and whether permanent or temporary. Colored tabs are used to indicate certain types of violation, as: Green for Labor violations, pink for Trade Practice, and Blue for PRA. The next step is the making out of the Docket cards. The first one is called the Master Control and is a 5x8 card. On this card is noted the name of the respondent, his address, the control number, docket number, the source of the case, type of violation, code violated, name of complainant, date docketed, and the person to whom the case is referred. Other cards, 3x5, are filled out in the same manner, with the exception of date docketed and person referred to, and filed alphabetically according to (1), source, such as State Office or Code Authority, (2), name of code violated, and (3), according to age, showing the oldest case first. As the case is transferred from one division to another, each transfer is recorded on the Master Control only. When a case is closed, the Master Control and the Age Distribution card are marked as "Case Closed", and the entire file, both permanent and temporary, is placed in the closed files. The temporary files are put into four separate groups: (1), Those of permanent cases sent to Litigation; (2), Those of cases sent back to source for additional information; (3), Those held in suspense awaiting action or reply, and (4), Those for cases which the permanents remain in the office. Each day, two reports, in duplicate, are set to the Control section, Compliance Division, Washington, D. C. On one is recorded all new cases which have been received that day for docketing. This report contains the same information as the Master Control card, minus the department to which it is referred. The second report is an Activity report, and shows what disposition is being made of the case: e.g., Hearing, Litigation, Blue Eagle removed, etc. It also shows the name and address of respondent, type of violation, and Code violated.

Figure 5.40. Task percentage breakdown, Hazel Webber

TIME SPENT ON DOCKET WORK AND
STENOGRAPHY

Friday--March 1

DOCKET WORK-----2 hours
Stenography-----5 hours (Van Dermark-letters and lists
(Smith-letters
(Hoffman-Analysis

Saturday--March 2

Docket Work-----3½ hours
Stenography-----None

Monday--March 4

Docket Work-----5 hours
Stenography-----2 hours (Van Dermark-letters
(Holmes-Notices of Hearings
(Smith-letters

Tuesday--March 5

Docket Work-----5 hours
Stenography-----2 hours (Smith-letters
(Van Dermark-letters

Wednesday--March 6

Docket Work-----6 hours
Stenography-----1 hour (Smith-letter
(Copying Analysis

Hazel J. Webber

X

Figure 5.41 Task percentage breakdown, Hazel Webber

11. TO THE EMPLOYEE: Describe in detail the work you do. Put each distinct duty, task, or process in a separate paragraph. Explain first those that require most of your time. Explain occasional duties last. In the column at the left opposite each paragraph enter the approximate percentage of your time devoted to the work described in that paragraph. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COMPOSE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON FORM 410.

Percentage of working time

60%

My statistical work consists chiefly of keeping informed regarding office supplies within Region VII and arranging such information in statistical form for the convenience of this office and for Washington. Considerable statistical work is required also in summarizing and compiling condensed reports for Washington in connection with various reports and surveys prepared by the State Offices relating to the Roberts Committee Survey, State Advisory Boards, District and State Recovery Boards, State and Local Adjustment Boards and miscellaneous organizations.

40%

I take dictation from Mr. Cook and Mr. Kirtley such as general correspondence to Washington, the State Offices and miscellaneous correspondence.

12. How long have your duties been substantially as described above? 6 months

13. Do you know of any persons whose duties are substantially the same as yours? yes. Name not more than three.

Holly Denny and Lucille Scalley

I hereby certify that the foregoing was composed by me after reading Form 410 and that it is a true statement of my duties.

[Redacted Signature]
(Signature of Employee)

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the statements made on both sides of this sheet are accurate and complete.

_____, 193____

[Redacted Signature]
(Signature of Executive Assistant,
Acting Administrative Assistant)

142

Figure 5.42. Task percentage breakdown, Agnes Craft

The bonuses accomplished a couple of things: First, they gave workers an appropriate amount of anxiety about their performance. Just a little bit of anxiety pushed workers to get to the "standard" set by management. With this style you could push everyone to work more. Bonuses also had little advantages such as cutting down on chatting among workers and people calling in sick. Further homogenization was accomplished by acts such as moving the stenographers to a room way back in the warehouse so they could not bother others or get caught up in social chatter.

Much of Scientific Management resulted in the dissolution of difference by homogenizing the population. By making employees' tasks outside their job description invisible and absorbing unique jobs into more general roles, efficiency theories expunged uniqueness from the office place. This produces workers who acted as "cogs in a machine" as Taylor puts it. Scientific management took individual office workers out of the process. By strictly allocating worker tasks—stamping, stapling, filing became just stamping, stamping, stamping—managers could ensure that workers had little knowledge of the overall production process. Without knowledge of the process, workers are powerless to change any part of that process or have any agency in the overall production of the company. "The escape valve of democratic opportunity disappeared as clerkship separated into routine skills, such as typing, and less easily measured skills, such as planning and decision making" (Kwolek-Folland 67).

Conclusion

For the NRA office in particular, hiring and evaluating employees were the most important parts of creating a productive office. After all, the NRA offices did not produce a sellable product; they merely authored and maintained the code system dictated by the National Industrial Recovery Act. This meant less emphasis on profit and more emphasis on efficiency.

In heeding the call for efficiency, businesses adopted forms to file their employees away as “textual representations.” Application forms were successful at paring down the agency of job applicants. In a handwritten or typed letter of application, an applicant possessed the power to decide what would go down on the page. In some cases where women wrote them, these letters contained personal life details that management did not make room for on an application form. This transformed the complex, multi-dimensional applicant into a shape much easier to file away and organize.

Similarly, the Job Description Questionnaire accomplished goals of efficiency by transforming daily work into job descriptions. By filling out Job Description Questionnaires, workers helped to construct clear job descriptions to describe their duties. No matter what tasks workers took on during a business day, his or her job was inventoried quite clearly in percentages and fractions, just as workers’ personalities were understood in terms of the role they played at work. The office network, and the people within it, had the power to “bestow qualities and motivations to Actors” (Ryder 33). The network does not find a place for an

individual's pre-existing skills and attributes; the individual becomes what the system requires according to its a priori standards and rules.

It is possible the processes and record-keeping of the 1930s office enabled a smoother transition into office culture for female workers. In one sense, the National Recovery Act can be read as an attempt by FDR to level the playing field for all workers by enforcing codes that standardized pay, job descriptions, raises and promotions, and benefits. In theory this would stop companies from discriminating against women based solely on their sex. On the other hand, in its desire to homogenize the work population it privileged previously established skill sets, most of which were held by men.

CONCLUSION FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Chapters One through Five of this dissertation have done the following: they have established appropriate historical context for the analysis of 1930s office communication, reviewed pertinent genre theory guiding the study while arguing for the importance of gender as an element in the analysis, conducted an analysis of two 1930s professional texts: business etiquette handbooks and National Recovery Administration personnel records. Chapter Six concludes this dissertation with a discussion of findings, implications, and related future research.

Office Communication and Genres

This dissertation has employed genre theory to conduct a historical analysis of two professional communication mediums: business etiquette handbooks for men and women, and application materials and Job Description Questionnaires from the National Recovery Administration archives. Genre theory allowed me to identify patterns in the communicative practices of the 1930s office, and further, to make meaning of the rhetorical work those patterns accomplished. Without the structure that genre theory imposes, the collection of handbooks and forms could not be read as cultural forces doing similar work in shaping office place values. To further emphasize the advantage of studying office communication through genre, I will turn to Charles Bazerman to articulate the wide reach of genre:

Genres help us navigate the complex worlds of written communication and symbolic activity, because in recognizing a text type we recognize many things about the institutional and social setting, the activities being proposed, the roles available to writer and reader, the motives, ideas, ideology [...]. (16)

The intersection between an “institutional” setting and a “social” setting is a central issue in the local office setting of the 1930s, where men and women were learning to adapt to new management strategies, new ways of conveying information, and new co-workers. This is a site ripe for understanding the construction of a shared culture through its communication routines, textual habits, and what Bazerman refers to as “symbolic behavior.” The roles available to workers are defined and shaped by the boundaries and value system created by genres. Carolyn Miller says simply that “Before we can act we must interpret” (Genre 156) and at the center of that interpretation are the genres that structure an organization’s communication methods. Evaluating office communication in terms of genre helps illuminate ways workers acclimate to a business culture by conforming to its discourse on multiple levels. Genres structure communication by imposing order on discourse behaviors, and that order produces identifiable patterns that help a researcher make meaning on both global and local levels.

In the context of my study, not only are textual practices being revised for efficiency, but gender practices as well. This enculturation means learning to model gender-appropriate behavior in an organizational environment, as well as gaining familiarity with communication techniques governed by specific types and formatting. “Successful communication [...] require[s] that the participants share common types” (Miller, Genre

157). In the 1930s office, some of these “common types” are application forms and Job Description Questionnaires, but they are also typified gender behaviors—male and female workers modeling rituals that symbolize the ideal male and female worker. Participants in the 1930s office were governed by strict gender narratives, brought on in part by the call for efficiency and everything that efficiency meant in terms of clear differentiation of all kinds, a concept that will be discussed further below. Successful workers lived these gender narratives as a part of their participation in a shared organizational value system, and that is understood best by reading both the intact and developing genres at play in the 1930s office.

Stability and Efficiency through Genre: Catalysts for a Cohesive Corporate Culture

This dissertation has chronicled the events and trends overlapping in the 1930s: the beginning of the contemporary office, new office technologies, the influence of Taylorism, and a shifting office demographic that included more women. Stringent records were kept after WWI, typed and filed by the workers of the 1930s office. Perhaps most importantly, The Great Depression threw the country into chaos and poverty, and spurred the New Deal and the National Recovery Act.

In response to this great change all around, the business world attempted to stabilize, and stabilizing office culture for this study meant developing ways to understand, account for, and control office discourse with genres. People at the top of the business hierarchy sought to install a system to regulate practices, thereby making them more predictable and easier to control. Genres enable communication practices to be routine, repeatable functions with

consistent outcomes, which provided relief from the unpredictability of the early 20th century office.

Just as the construction of power and gender are dialogic, so are the research questions that drive this study. Formulating answers to one means formulating answers, in part, to several of them, answers that create new questions. I have found that to talk about genre and stability is to also talk about a coherent corporate culture, which in turn leads unavoidably into the understanding of gender narratives and their impact on genre development, office hierarchy building, and office culture definitions of terms such as progress, qualification, skills, job duties, and efficiency. Genre, gender, and stability are the heart of this study and “the postwar efforts to return to 'normal'” (Hartman Strom 134); the interplay between these concepts is a complicated cycle of influence and resistance.

Unpacking this dissertation’s study of office etiquette handbooks and National Recovery Administration personnel records requires an articulation of an overarching concept, or finding, that I believe addresses several of the research questions: By ordering communication and social discourse practices, genres foster stability in business settings. This stability both promotes and is promoted by a coherent corporate culture, an integral part of which is the construction of polar opposite gender narratives. Clearly differentiated gender narratives contribute to culture guided by coherent rules—rules that bolster genre consistency and encourage constancy within the system. Threaded throughout this process—at least in the early 1900’s office—is the strive for efficiency. Efficiency, too, can spawn stability. This process is not linear, but rather a web of overlapping value construction.

Genres stabilize by conducting a surveillance of workers through text, which sets a homogenizing process into motion, minimizing differences—at least textually—from management’s viewpoint. Before genres can successfully stabilize, however, they themselves must be stabilized in form and action. This process, which I call the calibration of genres, is a cycle of trial and error and checks and balances designed to reach an ideal information obtaining. Differentiation, or clear partitioning, is the most prominent agent of stability in my analysis, seen in both the etiquette handbooks and the Job Description Questionnaires—differentiation in terms of gender, job class, and job responsibilities. Below I will discuss each of these genres separately.

Job Descriptions, Efficiency, and Systematic Management

The NRA Job Description Questionnaires ask employees to break down their jobs into percentages of what task takes them what amount of time. The philosophy of Scientific Management says this process of breakdown is a path to efficiency. Instead of describing employees who participate in several activities in a work day, the questionnaires describe employees with neatly divided duties. By filling out these questionnaires, employees might learn to structure their actual work to look like the percentage-driven description.

Theoretically this would allow employees to know exactly what needs to be done each and everyday; their tasks remain static on the job questionnaire. This strict categorizing, I believe, is a direct response to the chaos of the office.

If It Is Written Down, It Is True

Job descriptions also lead to stricter division between classes of workers by drawing textual distinctions between job types and responsibilities. Although the class distinctions may not have felt clear on a daily basis to workers on a local level, on record they were clear to those watching from above. The textual reality, a reality in which management has the luxury of operating, is seen as “real” to the outside world. If it is written down, it is true.

Marking power textually was seen as efficient, which is somewhat paradoxical considering it represents hyper documentation—consistent recording of reality with forms, charts, and files. In the harshest reading of this process, once an employee is represented by a file written by someone with the authority to do so, his or her story is written. Their textual reality is the truth. It is one dimensional, which makes it all the easier to handle, assess, hire, fire, promote, and discipline that employee. When it is written down, it is true.

Job descriptions are broken down by percentages, and dividing jobs into duties makes the representation of the job textual. When it exists textually it becomes the medium by which assessment is carried out. Management can have complete control of its job force in the palm of their hand—or at least in the filing cabinet in their office. Textual representation reduces an employee’s bulk—the amount of space it takes up in management’s comprehension of the employee. This renders an employee manageable in every sense of the word.

I recognize the risk of sounding as if I am positing that this entire process is a managerial conspiracy, or a kind of futuristic Big Brother view of the treatment of workers in a capitalist economy. However, the reading I am offering is, on the one hand, hypothetically driven by

the theoretical, and on the other hand, a material possibility to some extent. The language may sound severe, but the larger issue is how power and meaning are constructed in a professional setting by texts of all kinds. Certainly one offshoot of that issue is managerial ethics. The scope of my study does not allow me to take this concept on at length, but I believe future studies using genre theory are capable of provoking important discussion on the ethical terrain of management in the earliest 20th century as it applies to all workers, and particularly those workers who were historically disenfranchised.

Scientific Management and Worker Motivation in the 1930s Office

How workers were treated and managed in the 1930s office is a question that runs through this study, and it is intensified in light of Scientific Management policies. If so many Taylorist policies were unpopular among workers, how did Taylorism—in various incarnations— remain influential for the better part of 40 years? The short answer is that it worked; what motivated workers to make it successful, though? In looking at the job descriptions, application materials, and the etiquette handbooks, it appears workers were motivated, in part, by pride and individualism. Considering Taylor's belief that one key to efficiency was a de-emphasis on the individual, this motivation seems weak. Wouldn't homogenizing a population in the name of efficiency steal individual goal setting? Looking further, however, I understand that eradicating the worship of the notable individual made personal recognition an even more valuable commodity.

Why would one typist out of 85 in an office try to be better than everyone else? One of the problems with homogeneity is that when you make a community coherent by encouraging

and rewarding sameness, you take away workers' desire to stand out. In fact, homogeneity punishes those who stand out by disciplining lipstick that is too red or behavior that is too aggressive. When you homogenize jobs, when you draw clear class divisions, you have taken away a public notion of personal agency. Personal agency not only becomes unimportant, it becomes detrimental to the machine as a whole. It is inefficient.

In a more personal or family-type managerial setting, companies foster loyalty, which in turn fosters collective pride. Employees' work ethic is motivated by their desire to give as much back to the company as it gave them. They try to work quickly and efficiently knowing that as their company profits so do they. In a setting where individualism is seen as an unnecessary time waster, emphasis on the individual quirks and talents of one worker is taken away, only to be awarded in small increments in a bonus system. Bonuses are offered for exceeding a set goal, and these bonuses could be seen as a sort of parental congratulations. However, in Scientific Management in particular, it is the company that benefits most from fast workers. When a worker accomplishes more than the established requirement, the requirement for all workers increases. One faster worker at the top means everyone becomes a faster worker at the bottom.

Being awarded bonuses such as movie passes, gift certificates for ladies clothing shops, and coffee with the boss might be the only time anyone really looks at you as separate from anyone else. This could cause friction between employees, but not if you do a good job of depersonalizing the office spatially. If typists, for example, are seated in straight rows facing forward and have their breaks and lunchtimes staggered, then they can't talk to each other

anyway—particularly in a noisy typewriter room situated in the rear of an office. If you do not encourage fraternity, or in fact, if you discourage it, not only do you rid the office of pesky chatting, you also make it nearly impossible for workers to gather together and use their communal strength.

People notice difference, which is why you have to erase it, or at the very least officially minimize it. Wear lipstick: not so red that it stands out, not so pink that it stands out, but right there in the middle. To not wear lipstick is to be noticed, but to wear the wrong lipstick is to be noticed as well. Difference can act like a car wreck everyone slows down to see. Without difference—with nothing to see here—workflow runs smoothly. Homogeneity helps in avoiding daily fender benders, which might mean clashing personalities, or misplaced paperwork. Ideally, workers are dressed the same, made up the same, and respect the same social protocol— all conformities encourages by the narratives of the etiquette handbooks.

Finally, documentation like the job description questionnaire does not just allow employers an opportunity to calibrate job requirements and establish mean goals; it also serves to remind employees of their tasks. By considering their jobs in fractional amounts, an employee is taught to work in those same fractional amounts. Microscopically dividing each movement and making employees record each movement creates an environment where employees feel grateful for each little perk they receive. Their value system is reordered.

Etiquette Books, Gender Narratives, and Efficiency in Homogeneity

Various historical factors in the 1930s “created an unsettled economic and social environment. For many, the stability of race and gender relations became a priority” (Hartman Strom 134). In addressing gender’s role in enculturation, it is clear gender is constructed in the same way power is: dialogically. I have argued that the office etiquette handbooks were influential in the way they helped govern gender narratives in the office culture, but more important than seeing that is understanding that women in the office created the etiquette books as well. In a process that is far from chronological, women started working in the office, creating a measure of chaos and unrest. This unrest was a catalyst for methods designed to promote order and clarity. Part of that order and clarity was defining gender roles clearly.

Prior to this study, I would have said that these books, in their efforts, were statements of how society wanted women to be. After studying the handbooks next to the theories of Scientific Management and their influence on the office, I believe the books were less concerned with reflecting the way women should be in a moral sense than they were with simply differentiating the roles as clearly as possible in the name of coherence, cohesive efficiency. Hartman Strom says “[...] clear lines needed to be drawn on the basis of gender, or qualified women would soon demand to be included at the highest levels of professional life” (Hartman Strom 5) and her contention fits in well with the results of this study. Drawing these clear lines was not just about a reticence to promote women, though; it was a conservative reaction to vast change. “In the early twentieth century, managerial elites (almost always male) promoted nineteenth-century notions of gender to establish and

maintain their own dominance of institutions, the professions, and emerging discourses such as scientific management” (Hartman Strom 11). The books accomplished what the job questionnaires did—they marked clear divisions. It was simply easier to make the genders polar opposites than it was to give them the nuance and subtleties that exist in real life.

Gray cannot only be a scary proposition in terms of morality, the war, the depression, the stock market, but it is theoretically inefficient. Gray makes rules harder to construct, because gray is the source of exceptions to rules not the basis for them. Gender as a dichotomy is black and white. Gender as a continuum is not. Individuals are perceived as male or female, masculine or feminine, based on what they say and do. I do not think gender as a performance can be seen any more clearly than in the office

Future Directions for Research: Other Eras, and Others

My intention has not only been to contribute a historical perspective to our understanding of rhetorical practices in the workplace in an era that professional communication has not studied extensively, but to address the role gender plays in genre development and enculturation. Considering I was limited by the relatively small sample of personnel documents I was able to study from the NRA files, the most obvious future study would be personnel documents on a much larger scale. Other studies have to be done to see what kinds of patterns can be articulated about gender in the office. Do women adapt to particular genres differently than men? Are there traditional kinds of “women’s ways of knowing” that help women in the office? Can women, for example, grasp the social part of the office architecture before men? Do men adapt more easily to the idea of decorum in an office—no emotion, all

business, “rational” thought and behavior, not mixing personal and business, etc.? How do people come to be part of a community? How did strictly defined gender roles manifest themselves in daily office interaction? Is there any way of measuring assessing gender performance and gender adaptation? Are there gendered components to writing? Gendered genres? How do preconceived notions of gender affect both the creation of and adaptation to genres?

One direction is certainly being able to study artifacts like this in larger number in order to get a chance to play some of these patterns out to see if they hold. They may or they may not, but either way we will have begun to understand genre adaptation and gender, certain skills that work best in corporate culture, and certain personalities who are more suited for enculturation. Reaching further in might enable us to write stronger narratives of the learning curve of men and women in genre adaptation or it might enable getting at more personal stories of men’s and women’s initiation into office culture.

In Chapter Two of this dissertation I commented that components of class and race were present in the 1930s in the way NRA policies were interpreted and carried out. My analysis and conjecture concerns white, middle class women. The women in these NRA records went to high school, graduated from high school, and many of them went to some kind of secretarial school. There are layers within the so-called middle class, of course, but these women were not poverty-stricken. More investigation must be done on what is absent in the office.

Diversity in time period would enhance a study of the 1930s. By comparing the 1930s to the 1940s office, I can see if the 1930's are indeed a singular decade in terms of historical change and its attending chaos. Are there patterns across time periods that might discount connections between Scientific Management and the rhetorical work of the genres I have study? Was genre calibration going on at the same rate in other eras? Were genres more stable in one era than another? These and other questions would benefit from an expansion into popular culture genres of the 1930s like film, fiction, advertisements, and music. Each of these genres contributes to a culture's production of values, and to understand these genres better would be to understand more of what workers brought into the office rather than simply what they brought out.

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